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In Our Own Voices:
A Critical Participatory Study of the Wellbeing of Female Undergraduate Students in Nigeria

Hephzibah (Zibah) Adaora Nwako

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Abstract

The subjective wellbeing of female undergraduate students in Nigeria has received little research attention. This study explores the issue through the lens of postcolonial feminism, focusing on the lived experiences, 'voices' and perspectives of fifteen female students at a case study university in the South-East of Nigeria. Using the theoretical frameworks of subjective wellbeing and the capability approach to gender justice, the study fills a gap in female students' wellbeing literature in Nigeria.

A critical participatory methodology enhanced the study with the female students as co-constructors of knowledge. The wider influences on their capabilities for wellbeing are also investigated through interaction with secondary sources, including interviews with a male student, staff members and key documents. The other methods used to collect data were observations and fieldnotes, campus walks, and participatory group sessions with mapping and vignettes. Thematic and interactional approaches are employed in the analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

The study argues that first, a clearer distinction should be made between the terms *subjective* and *personal* in wellbeing discourse. It establishes that *wellbeing* is a Eurocentric term that does not generally reflect the realities of the Nigerian higher education context; rather the term *welfare* is more commonly used and understood. Second, there is a need for increased awareness and the provision of students' mental health services and resources, including gender-related guidance and counselling that is crucial to personal wellbeing. Third, the wellbeing of female students is influenced by numerous external welfare factors specific to the Nigerian higher education context, which constitute five dimensions namely, socio-cultural, political, environmental, academic and economic aspects. Fourth, it is essential to empower the female student and develop her personal wellbeing, human capabilities and agency as well as establish collective action with others.

The thesis contributes to knowledge by developing a new map which highlights that the interaction between the intrinsic self and extrinsic aspects of context, constitutes the personal welfare and wellbeing capabilities of female undergraduate students in Nigeria. The map will also be useful to researchers working with groups that are different from, albeit with some similarities to, this target group.

Recommendations are made for ways to support female students' wellbeing through *theory* on decolonising women in postcolonial Africa; *policy* in Nigeria and in higher education institutions; and *practice* at the case study institution on gender, mental health, transformative pedagogy and student engagement. The thesis concludes with implications for further research and the importance of the self-empowering role of female students in achieving their own wellbeing capabilities.

Key words: female undergraduate students; wellbeing; the capability approach; gender justice; postcolonial feminism; critical participatory research.

Dedication

The first man who loved me
The first male feminist I knew
You shunned patriarchy
You fought for women
You gave us a voice
Because of you, I am.
Thank you for the lessons
Thank you for the love.

In my master's dissertation, I wrote this to you:

In loving memory of my hero, mentor and Dad,
Emeritus Professor Festus Aghagbo Nwakonobi
(Obata Obie)
19th October 1933 – 16th February 2014

I will yet make you proud of me!

Now, finally, I know that
with your wide grin, eyes twinkling with mischief, and trademark belly-aching laugh,
I hear it in your voice:

'Aaado, I am damn well proud of you!!!'

And on graduation day
with love overflowing from my heart
wishing you were here with me
I will wear your cap and whisper back:

'My Daddyo, this is for you. Continue to rest in peace.'

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All glory to GOD Almighty – '*...being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.'* (Philippians 1 v 6, World English Bible). I am humbled and eternally grateful for this opportunity and for Your grace!

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Mum, Stella Kezia Lecky-Nwako, from an early age you showed me by example that there is a reward for hard work, and although you may not have fully understood why I decided to go down this path, you asked questions, remained interested and most importantly, kept praying for me. I appreciate that, and you! I have named this thesis *FANELLA*, in your honour.
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I write for those women who do not speak, for those who do not have a voice because
they were so terrified, because we are taught to respect fear more than ourselves.
We've been taught that silence would save us, but it won't.
(Audre Lorde)

At the beginning, we were strangers. By the end, we were sisters. Please keep pushing, keep growing and keep soaring! *Dalu nu rinne, umunne m.*

Author’s Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Hephzibah (Zibah) Adaora Nwako DATE: 05/03/2020

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Acronyms

ASUU	Academic Staff Union of Universities
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BESWAMA	Benoni State Waste Management Authority
CA	Capabilities or Capability Approach
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FSS	Faculty of Social Sciences
G&C	Guidance and Counselling
HE/I	Higher Education / Institution
HoD	Head of Department
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NASU	Non-Academic Staff Union
OWB	Objective Wellbeing
PWB	Personal Wellbeing
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
RQ	Research Question
SAO	Student Affairs Officer
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGE	School of General Education
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SUG	Student Union Government
SWB	Subjective Wellbeing
TA	Thematic Analysis
TPO	Teaching Practice Orientation
TSA	Treasury Single Account
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UniSEN	University of the South East of Nigeria
UWA	University Women's Association
VC	Vice Chancellor
WeD	Wellbeing in Developing Countries
WHO	World Health Organization
WOSWA	Women Students Welfare Association

-1- Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

This study problematises the wellbeing of female undergraduate students in Nigeria. The undergraduate years of study constitute a vital bridge between adolescence and adulthood; the experiences obtained during this transition have the potential to shape the lives, decisions and futures of young people (Zhao and Kuh, 2004; Andersen et al, 2008; Baum et al, 2010). These experiences also have a formative influence on wellbeing, whether positively or negatively. Equally relevant is the context, group and culture being studied. The following quote from Amadiume's (1987) book entitled *'Male Daughters, Female Husbands'* encapsulates the lives and conditions of women in the South-East of Nigeria, which is the context of this study:

> Since women were basically seen as producers, the principals of control and protection applied to them throughout their productive period, whether as daughters, wives, or mothers. It is said when a woman outgrows the question, 'whose daughter is she?' people then ask, 'whose wife is she?' (p. 69)

These are still the expectations levied upon the group of young women in this study, as it is located in the same context and culture described above by Amadiume. Located in West Africa, Nigeria gained her independence from British colonial rule in 1960 but still suffers from its persistent legacies. Due to cultural, religious, socio-political, historical and colonial, economic and patriarchal aspects of the context, women in Nigeria are seen as unequal to men and therefore are disempowered, marginalised and oppressed (Hammond and Jablow, 1992; Aina, 1998; Abdullahi, 2000; Asiyanbola, 2005; Para-Mallam, 2010; Makama, 2013). As a result, gender equality and related issues such as gender mainstreaming, women's access to employment and earnings, political participation, development, educational enrolment, parity and attainment, inclusion, violence and the oppression of women continue to dominate the gender justice discourse and scholarship in Nigeria. Although gender is said to be socially constructed and relates to masculinity or femininity (Lindsey, 2015), I use the term in this study to refer to the biological state of the male and female sex.

According to Reeves and Baden (2000), everyone has a right to equity and fairness for the benefits of social justice. Social justice is conceptualised here as challenging inequality and discrimination by placing value on fairness, equal opportunity and diversity, in a bid to promote a just society (Robinson, 2016). When women face injustice, their rights are withheld, they are further subject to intimidation, limitation and discrimination in attempting to access resources and opportunities. The following excerpt is taken from a bulletin published by the higher education institution (HEI) used as the research context for this study – the University of the South-East of Nigeria (UniSEN[1]), and points to the bias against female students, some of whom are the subjects of this research:

> The [senior official of the institution][2] in his remark also buttressed the need for students of the University to get committed to their studies, as this he said, is the basis for being in the University. He further advised female students of the University to live an upright and responsible life.
> (UniSEN Bulletin, 2016 para. 3)

This statement raises concerns about the underlying discriminatory conditions that may affect the female students, who are exclusively faced with the implicit challenges and expectations to conform to the idea of living 'an upright and responsible life' (ibid, para. 3). It points to areas where fairness and equity are denied to young women in the study context. Inevitably, their wellbeing is threatened (Nussbaum, 2000). Since some of the afore-mentioned challenges to gender justice are faced by female university students but given the dearth of published studies or policies about students' wellbeing in Nigeria, this study attempts to critically construct this knowledge by exploring the current state of their wellbeing.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

> Wellbeing is clearly an individual and therefore subjective construct - only I know how I feel about myself and my life. But the socio-cultural environment I inhabit influences my sense of wellbeing and my appreciation of subjectivities. I cannot

[1] For anonymity purposes, pseudonyms are used for the institution, all names and places throughout the thesis. Similarly, institutional documents are cited in this thesis but are not referenced for data protection reasons.

[2] As above, the designation of the said official in square brackets has been changed to protect the institution's identity.

> detach my own wellbeing from the world of which I am a part. (Jackson, 2013 p. 3)

As a middle-aged woman who was educated and raised in my home country Nigeria, and having since lived, studied and worked in other countries, I have developed a professional and personal interest in the field of women's development. I seek insights into the self-perceptions and self-identities of girls and women in Nigeria, to better understand their aspirations, what they consider to be achievements, their views about their own potential, and the ways in which they deal with daily challenges. As encapsulated by Jackson's (2013) quote above, I am interested in learning about their individual lived experiences and their collective quality of life[3], in their own words.

Throughout my secondary and undergraduate years of study in the 1980s, I was privileged to gain what I consider to be a good standard of education. There has since been a steady decline in standards within the Nigerian education system, judging by the growing body of literature on this issue (Odia and Omofonmwan, 2007; Duze, 2011; Asiyai, 2013; Amadi, 2017). Having also been brought up in an academic home environment and receiving mainly positive influences from the adults and peers in the educational institutions that I attended, I gained independence and a healthy sense of confidence in myself, my agency, my capabilities and in my decision-making skills. In the intervening years, these influences had and continue to have a favourable impact. Conversely, it is also these positive personal experiences, professional interactions with young women, as well as the afore-mentioned declining educational standards, that have led to my increased awareness and interest in the experiences and realities of the female students in Nigeria. The focus on female *university* students specifically stems from my experiences as a training practitioner; I have delivered personal development and wellbeing programmes to this group in HEIs in the United Kingdom. Undergraduate students were selected because of their availability within the research context in the timeframe available for the study. Moreover, female postgraduate students are not readily accessible because most are self-funded; many are in full-time employment and are therefore studying part-time. They are also predominantly mature women with families and caring

[3] Some studies refer to quality of life as wellbeing, or use both terms synonymously (Camfield, 2006; Muslim et al. 2012; Hobbs, 2016).

responsibilities, and do not live within the university campus due to a lack of suitable accommodation facilities (Fatunde, 2010a; Lasode and Awote, 2014).

In addition to my personal rationale above, this study is significant for two reasons – firstly, it addresses the gaps in gender, wellbeing and methodological literature, particularly in Nigeria. Whilst identifying the research problem above, I argued that wellbeing is a fundamental aspect of the life of a human being as it influences all other areas including education, physiology, work, psychology, and the economy. Chapter 2 of this thesis describes some of the international research that has been carried out on student wellbeing (with a few studies focusing on the health of female students); there, I stress the relevance and importance of these studies. To date, however, I have found no research specifically focused on the overall wellbeing of female university students, indicating a significant gap for this study to address.

As part of this general rationale, the study also fills a methodological gap in wellbeing research in Nigeria by deploying a critical participatory approach and related qualitative methods. Walking interviews (referred to in this study as campus walks) and participatory mapping seem to be particularly innovative within the Nigerian context, as I am yet to find any studies that have employed these methods. Qualitative methods also provide a more in-depth analysis of the issues when compared with the majority of previous studies in Nigeria, which have tended to use quantitative tools such as surveys and questionnaires; the least used approach is mixed methods (Kamba, 2010; Nwakpa, 2015). According to some academic scholars, this is due to time constraints, funding scarcity, poor educational facilities, corruption, or misplaced priorities, to name a few assumptions (Ogbogu, 2009; Aina, 2014). The result is that qualitative methods are not fully utilised and so in-depth or sensitive data are unlikely to be collected. As participatory methodologies are rarely used in the Nigerian context, no such study on wellbeing in Nigeria has been thus far identified.

As its local rationale, this study supports the empowerment of female students as well as holds the university accountable to reduce injustice and discrimination. It provides an opportunity for the voices of female students to be heard and for readers to better understand participants' perceptions of their own wellbeing. The research also critically investigates their capabilities through gender justice, such as when they navigate the oppression and marginalisation commonly experienced by women in HEIs (Young, 2004; Hytten and Bettez, 2011).

Participatory research can have transformational influence on the lives of participants, as this study goes on to show, allowing them to express their capabilities for wellbeing. Furthermore, the report of the research findings holds institutions accountable; the findings necessitate that serious consideration is given to issues that threaten students' wellbeing and charge institutional leaders and decision-makers with responsibility to review any existing equal opportunities policies and/or create new meaningful ones. As White (2006) indicates:

> The promotion of 'wellbeing' as the ultimate goal of social, health and development policy is now well established amongst academics and policymakers alike… (p. 3)

Indeed, the development of her intrinsic wellbeing is not the responsibility of the student alone, as it can also be influenced by extrinsic factors, as will be discussed in the section further below on the research questions.

1.3 Aim, Objectives and Research Questions

From the issues raised in the preceding sections, the overall aim of this study is to critically explore the ways in which the wellbeing of female undergraduate students is conceptualised and understood in Nigeria. In line with this aim, the research objectives are to:

- Critically review the international literature relating to wellbeing, the capability approach, postcolonial feminism and gender justice,
- Document the nature and challenges faced in the current HE policy context in Nigeria,
- Conduct a detailed qualitative study of the wellbeing of female undergraduates in one Nigerian university,
- Consider the implications of the study for future HE policy and practice in the institution and the wider Nigerian context,
- Explore implications for theory of female students' wellbeing and gender justice, for women in postcolonial Africa as well as for future research.

To achieve the above aim and objectives, the following research questions (RQs) will be explored:

1. How do the female undergraduate students experience wellbeing?

2. What are the wider contextual influences on the wellbeing of the research participants?

The first RQ focuses on the perspectives, meanings and lived experiences of wellbeing expressed by the female undergraduate students: essentially, what they *feel* and *think* about their own quality of life. The second RQ investigates a broad range of situations that shape their wellbeing capabilities and experiences, such as the social, cultural, historical, political, material and institutional processes that construct their environment. RQ2 further considers the availability and/or implementation of relevant policies, services or practices and their existing or intended effects on the female students' wellbeing. The wider factors pertaining to gender justice in education will also be given consideration through the lens of the capability approach.

1.4 Overview of Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks are adopted by the study: subjective wellbeing and the capability approach to gender justice. Wellbeing is a 'multi-dimensional construct' (Dodge et al, 2012 p. 222) which does not appear to have a distinct definition, but is instead illustrated with descriptions such as autonomy, life's purpose, positive relationships, the recognition of potential, fulfilment of goals, happiness, engagement and life satisfaction (Dodge et al, 2012; White, 2006; Thomas, 2009; Forgeard et al, 2011). Despite the lack of a single conceptual definition, there are several theories of wellbeing including psychological, objective, self-determination, social, capabilities, subjective, hedonism, wellbeing as health, and eudaimonism, amongst others (Nussbaum, 2000; Gough, 2005; Gasper, 2007; White, 2010; Jackson, 2013). As discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2, this study is concerned with the subjective theory of wellbeing as it relates to countries in the Global South, using White's (2010) subjective, material and social dimensions.

At this stage, subjective wellbeing (SWB) is generally described as the feelings and thoughts that people have about their own quality of life (Office for National Statistics, ONS 2015). However, this description does not adequately acknowledge the contextual influences that may enhance or thwart individual wellbeing, particularly in relation to social justice and gender equality. As discussed in subsequent chapters, these contextual differences are particularly important in postcolonial contexts such as Nigeria, therefore the study employs the capability approach (CA) as an additional guiding framework. The capability approach refers to the

freedom one has to be and do the things they value, thereby leading to their own wellbeing (Nussbaum, 1999; 2000). In this study, this approach not only provides an understanding of wellbeing as a human freedom (Robeyns, 2017), but it also supports a contextual investigation into the views, interactions and power dynamics between groups: between female students and university staff or authorities, between male and female students, or other cross-group relations. Hence, the study is conducted from a relativist ontology and postcolonial feminist perspective, using a critical participatory methodology with the afore-mentioned stakeholders to explore these issues of gender justice, as discussed in the next section. Both the SWB and the CA frameworks also help to explain how the key concepts in the RQs are theorised in addressing the wellbeing capabilities of female students within the HE context and the wider postcolonial Nigerian society.

1.5 Philosophical and Methodological Approaches

This study takes a relativist worldview which reflects my belief that people experience reality in different ways and is consistent with my ontological view of wellbeing as subjective. Likewise, I use a postcolonial feminist perspective to understand how knowledge is constructed in relevant contexts. This approach not only highlights the ways in which women in countries such as Nigeria are still affected by the cultural, political and economic legacies of colonialism[4], but also calls attention to the frequent misrepresentation of the experiences of women that live in non-Western contexts (Raymond, 2015; Okeke-Ihejirika et al, 2019). Accordingly, a critical participatory research methodology is employed to plan, collect and analyse the data in collaboration with fifteen primary participants as co-creators of knowledge. Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018) posit that participatory research is a process of social justice that is controlled by both the researcher *and* the researched. Critical participatory research further enables a critique of power, context, ethics, structures, and even the analytical research process (p. 2). As previously indicated in Section 1.2, qualitative research methodologies such as participatory inquiry are rarely used in the Nigerian context as participants generally conflate research with the use of questionnaires; therefore this approach was deemed suitable for this study in the

[4] Colonialism is 'a form of domination – the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behaviour of other individuals or groups' (Horvath, 1972 p. 46).

context as I was concerned to engage in a critique of the ways in which power is exercised in Nigeria, through continuing coloniality and patriarchy. This methodology also supports the related qualitative methods of data collection used in the study namely, participant observation and field notes, campus walks, participatory mapping and vignettes, interviews and documents-as-data. Similarly, the methodology enabled me to engage with the research participants through the thematic and interactional approaches of narrative data analysis.

My positionality in this study is as an 'in-betweener' (Milligan, 2014 p. 14) – neither an insider to UniSEN nor an outsider to the HE context in Nigeria. Being in this liminal space offered me valuable learning opportunities including the ability to critically compare existing institutional policies with current contextual practices as observed; or from my own relativist experiences of wellbeing, to better understand the complexities of wellbeing capabilities for female students in the university. The term in-betweener also reflects my attempts during the research process to balance the roles of *advocate* and *activist* – the former on behalf of the female students as a group that faces discrimination and injustice because of their gender (Creswell, 2013) and the latter as a *critical partner* concerned with foregrounding the external influences on their wellbeing capabilities. These concerns are espoused in Hanisch's (1969) essay entitled 'The personal is the political' where she explains that her political participation in a group is not undertaken with the aim of solving her personal problems, but to be able to contribute to collective action for solutions which will impact the personal problems of the people in the group. The merging of personal and political action in this study is as significant as the collaboration and participation of the female students as co-constructors of knowledge. It is important that their opinions, stories, challenges and reflections of their own wellbeing and capabilities are heard. Therefore, 'giving voice to those who have been normally excluded and silenced' (Giroux, 1992 p. 209) not only enables self-empowerment, but also explores ideas for peer and group action to bring about change. These philosophical approaches that guide the study are detailed in Chapter 4, where the research design is presented.

1.6 Outline of Chapters

This thesis is comprised of nine chapters in total. The second chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that guide the study. I first detail the history and philosophy of wellbeing, consider

different wellbeing theories, and identify subjective wellbeing and the capability approach as suitable for this study. In this chapter, I also question the idea of universal wellbeing and review the relevant international wellbeing literature and discourse to establish the theoretical and contextual gaps relating to female university students in Nigeria. I argue that the dimensions of subjective wellbeing are relatable to the context of study; however, the framework lacks adequate grounding in social justice, power and representation, which are issues addressed by the capability approach. In addition, the capability approach takes into consideration the conversion factors and adaptive preferences that are highlighted in certain contexts. I subsequently link these complementary frameworks with the research questions, the relativist and postcolonial feminist approaches, as these both have ontological and epistemological implications for wellbeing.

Chapter 3 describes the research context of Nigeria as a postcolonial country in Sub-Saharan Africa with patriarchal beliefs and traditions. I address the ways in which issues of gender equality and equity affect women in Nigerian universities and present the injustices faced by female students. In the chapter, I also discuss the wellbeing capabilities of students and young people in Nigeria in the light of some international agreements such as the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. I argue that the agreements stem from global policy and therefore seem to perpetuate the colonial legacies and conditions that affect women in Nigerian HEIs rather than improve them. In the last part of the chapter, I identify the main challenges faced by Nigerian public universities before introducing UniSEN as the case study institution where the study was conducted.

The fourth chapter is divided into three parts; the first part begins with my research positionality as an 'in-betweener' to the Nigerian and UniSEN contexts and as a human instrument in the study. This is followed by the philosophical underpinnings of the study namely, relativism as ontology and postcolonial feminism as the epistemological lens of knowing. In the chapter, I argue that the latter is sceptical of and contests the hegemonic, Eurocentric narrative of Western feminism. As methodology, a critical participatory research is used to recognise the power differentials and privilege the perspectives of the young women who are vulnerable and marginalised in the context. Part II of Chapter 4 deals with the development of the research project, continues with the choice of UniSEN for case study research, and then presents the sampling strategies used to select participants and their levels

of participation. I introduce the participants and other secondary sources of data. The chapter further discusses the fieldwork process starting from the pilot study to detailed descriptions of the multiple methods used to collect data in line with the participatory methodology. A critique of these methods follows. Part II also communicates the data analysis phases and elaborates on the thematic and interactional approaches that were used. In Part III, research ethics are considered, and an argument is made regarding the need for a postcolonial approach to conducting ethical research in related contexts of study. Issues of research trustworthiness are addressed, with a focus on reflexivity.

Chapter 5 answers the first research question of the study by presenting the participants' experiences of subjective wellbeing under four main themes: feelings and emotions, religion and spirituality, health and safety, and being female. The findings in this chapter lay the foundation of a new wellbeing map that is rooted in the intrinsic wellbeing capabilities and agency of the participants. Subsequently, Chapter 6 answers the second research question by addressing the wider influences on the participants' wellbeing, using the themes of place and space, teaching and learning, 'UniStress' and student activism. These influences are added to the developing map and categorised into contextual wellbeing dimensions.

Chapter 7 draws together four arguments that are highlighted in the findings chapters including problematising subjective wellbeing, assessing provision for mental and emotional capabilities, identifying deficit capabilities and proposing the enhancement of individual capabilities before collective ones. The chapter also features the study's contribution to knowledge by re-conceptualising wellbeing, capabilities and gender justice for female students in Nigeria through the new personal welfare and wellbeing conceptual map.

In Chapter 8, recommendations are made for theory, policy and practice. First, a theoretical challenge is indicated for decolonising mindsets regarding women in postcolonial Africa. Policy changes are advocated for female students in relation to their gender and mental health, not only in higher education but in the wider Nigerian society. This is followed by suggestions for the improvement of UniSEN's existing practices through implementing a critical transformative pedagogy, restructuring information, advice and guidance services, developing the institutional environment and through student engagement. The chapter shares the implications from this study that warrant further research.

The concluding chapter identifies the limitations of the study and critically explores the research journey and outcomes in the participants' own voices. There, I detail transformative and emancipatory lessons learnt from the critical participatory process and how the study could have been improved. The chapter culminates with a personal note of encouragement and a call-to-action for the participants to engage in self-empowerment practices to improve their own wellbeing.

-2- Theoretical Frameworks

Overview

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that guide this study, namely subjective wellbeing and the capability approach to gender justice. I consider how these frameworks intersect to give a coherent structure to the research problem, and how they relate to the research questions. In the chapter, I identify the importance of the study within existing wellbeing research. Finally, I introduce the postcolonial feminist approach as the lens through which the substantive topics are studied in the context of Nigeria; this approach is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

2.1 Wellbeing – History, Philosophy and Theories

This first section covers the history and philosophical underpinnings of wellbeing, as well as some of the main wellbeing theories. This foundation will be used to identify an appropriate theoretical framework for the present study.

The concept of wellbeing was first proposed by Greek philosopher Aristotle as 'eudaimonia' which he describes as the 'overarching goal of all human actions' (Dodge et al, 2012 p. 223). Eudaimonia is interpreted by some scholars as happiness, flourishing or pleasure (Nussbaum, 1995; Gough et al, 2006; Taylor, 2015). Citing Williams (1983), Gough et al (2006) contend that wellbeing replaced the term *welfare* most likely before the fourteenth century. One contemporary definition of welfare is the 'senses relating to wellbeing [and] the state or condition of doing well… provision of initiatives, funding, or facilities within a business or other institution to maintain or improve the well-being of workers, students, etc.' (Oxford University Press, 2019 para. 1, 4). Likewise, the conceptual term 'well-being', though most popularly used in relation to health, widely encompasses the philosophical idea of what is good for a person or how well their life is going for them (Crisp, 2016). This often includes both the positive and negative aspects of life, with the latter often referred to as 'ill-being' (p. 4) or unhappiness. That said, a review of the literature undertaken by Dodge et al (2012) shows that scholars have

not been able to agree on one accepted definition of wellbeing. Although 'welfare' and 'wellbeing' are used interchangeably in this thesis, the term 'welfare' is more common in the Nigerian HEI context, research and discourse; it is used to cover the 'services, processes and procedures whose primary purpose is to motivate, maintain and enhance the physical, social, intellectual and emotional well-being of students' (Alani et al, 2010 p. 43).

Jackson (2013) further outlines some of the different theories, also referred to as traditions or lenses, which position wellbeing as either eudaimonic, psychological, or a self-determination theory – meaning to use one's will to satisfy one's needs. There is also social wellbeing which denotes meaningful belonging with others or valued participation in groups. Other wellbeing theories include the following: discussions around hedonic theory which refers to 'what is good for us, how we should behave, and what motivates us to behave in the way that we do' (Weijers, 2012 p. 15); subjective wellbeing (see Section 2.2); objective wellbeing that relates to the external notions of what constitutes a well-lived life for a human being (Gasper, 2007); health-derived wellbeing; and the capability approach to wellbeing (see Section 2.4). Notwithstanding these various theories and the absence of a set definition of wellbeing, most scholars agree that there are several descriptions and dimensions of the concept including happiness, satisfaction, autonomy, life's purpose, self-acceptance, realisation of potential, good health, engagement, fulfilment, quality of life, capabilities, positive relationships, and accomplishment (White, 2006; Thomas, 2009; Forgeard et al, 2011; Dodge et al, 2012). In this study, I focus on autonomy, engagement, quality of life and capabilities as these dimensions relate to the substantive topic being explored from the perspectives of the participants within the Nigerian HE context.

2.1.1 Frameworks of Wellbeing

This study explores wellbeing as the quality of life (ONS, 2015) lived and described by female undergraduate students as pertaining to their contextual experiences in a Nigerian university. Pérez de Cuéllar (1995) posits that 'the ultimate aim of development is the universal physical, mental and social well-being of every human being' (p. 16). This suggests that each human being should have the opportunity to develop according to their individual conceptions of the ways in which life can be better for them. The question is whether this better quality of life

should be viewed from an inward perspective and so is self-fulfilling (subjective) or if it should be realised from sources and situations external to a human being (objective).

While Arneson (1999) defends the theory of objective wellbeing (OWB) in making the wellbeing of a person wholly dependent on their external world conditions despite their own state of mind, White (2008) conversely argues that 'there is no "objective" reality, outside culture or society, which can be set against people's subjective, encultured, perceptions of their circumstances' (p. 5). White presents a powerful argument which reflects my point of view: the limitations imposed by society and culture should not be accepted as the benchmark for judging wellbeing. Moreover, the person-centred nature of one's individual quality of life makes it difficult to conceptualise through OWB. As reiterated by Jackson (2013), 'all persons, including officials and academics, see and speak from a particular position, and hence none has an unbiased, universal vision' (p. 3).

Another critique of OWB is that most of the external measurements consider wellbeing often according to scientific terms of human capital. This is frequently used to determine economic and welfare resources, housing conditions, educational levels and literacy, and poverty or crime rates (Galloway, 2005; Costanza et al, 2007; Jones, 2011). These measurements are generally from quantitative studies involving large population samples. Their results, though pragmatic for economic reasons, neither produce in-depth insights into the lives of the respondents nor adequately depict the complexity of relationships, equalities, creative experiences, rights, individual perspectives, empowerment and contextual interactions that define people, as these are not measurable in numeric terms (Unterhalter, 2017). Thus, such measurements are unlikely to provide a complete picture of the real wellbeing issues that people have and how they can be dealt with. White (2006) is especially critical of objective theories, stating that '[wellbeing] promises a rounded, positive, and human-centred approach in place of narrowly economic conceptions of poverty, or restrictively medical understandings of health' (p. 3). Although Costanza et al (2007, p. 269) posit that 'many objective indicators merely assess the opportunities that individuals have to improve QoL [quality of life] rather than assessing QoL itself', I would argue in that a contextualised, qualitative approach such as the CA to wellbeing would be more useful for assessing such opportunities in the context of my study (see Section 2.4 for a detailed discussion of this). The OWB theories are therefore

unsuitable for this study, thus in the next section, I consider the subjective theories of wellbeing.

2.2 Subjective Wellbeing

According to Diener (2006), SWB is

> an umbrella term for the different valuations people make regarding their lives, the events happening to them, their bodies and minds, and the circumstances in which they live. (pp. 399-400)

In this thesis also, SWB was generally described as people's feelings and thoughts about their own quality of life (ONS, 2015). These statements presume that wellbeing should be a subjective, individual judgement, rather than one decided from external influences. From this stance, the OWB theory of measurements and indicators cannot completely address the subjective constructs produced by students considering their own wellbeing and so SWB approaches highlight the importance of noting other aspects that may affect a person. Expanding on Diener's (2006) description which emphasises an individual's self-perceptions and the circumstances in which they live, SWB is presented in terms of individual values, human needs and desires, personal development and social interactions.

Naess (1999) summarised SWB as 'the individual's experience, or perception, of how well he or she lives' (p. 115). An individual could assess their SWB in terms of how they feel about the community that they live in, what they own, their personal safety, happiness, their views on fairness and justice, and how satisfied they are with their work, leisure activities and life in general (Rapley, 2003). Subjective topics of wellbeing have been categorised differently by scholars as core domains or dimensions, as shown for example in Galloway's (2005) comparison of the results of five Quality of Life reviews from across a range of disciplines. Galloway's (2005) table shows that similar terms are used to define the domains as they relate to one another. Some examples are 'disability, health or physical wellbeing'; 'interpersonal relations, social inclusion, relationships or community wellbeing'; and 'psychological or emotional wellbeing' (p. 24).

The majority of SWB models have incorporated the domains in one form or another, ranging from Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, cited by Jackson (2013) as one of the earliest models

which covers physiological aspects, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization, to Chambers' (2006) five dimensions of wellbeing, namely freedom of action and choice (rights; level of independence), good social relations, enough for a good life (material), physical wellbeing, and security (safety). Since I conducted an in-depth study into the lived experiences of a certain group of students within a non-Western context (see next section), their views and perceptions of wellbeing determined the domains that I focused on. This also shaped my choice of SWB model, as is discussed further below.

One critique of SWB is that it does not take account of contextual adaptive preferences as conceptualised by Nussbaum (2000) through the CA. Adaptive preferences refer to the horizons within which people are able to imagine and articulate possibilities for themselves. This aspect of the CA is covered in Section 2.4. More importantly, the SWB theory has been accused of being Eurocentric in its terminology and framings; for instance, Hommerich and Klien (2012) state that 'in the Western intellectual tradition, happiness is often seen as the most important goal to strive for' (pp. 294-295). One of my challenges, therefore, was to discover its usefulness and applicability in a broader and more universal non-Western context.

2.2.1 Is Subjective Wellbeing a Universal Concept?

> Wellbeing, that is, is understood in collective terms, as not the property of individuals but something that belongs to and emerges through relationships with others (Christopher 1999). This is particularly evident in studies outside the West, where people tend to lay greater emphasis on collective identities and relationships of (often unequal) reciprocity. (White, 2015 p. 6)

In choosing a SWB framework appropriate for my study, it was important to consider the Nigerian cultural context and the UniSEN environment as the specific research settings. I therefore deemed it necessary to ascertain the universality of wellbeing as a concept, since another criticism of the majority of the existing SWB frameworks is that they tend to overlook the cultural and historical aspects of different research contexts, and are based on Western ideals and biases, thereby ignoring the identities, values and experiences of disadvantaged, oppressed or poorer people and countries (Suh, 2000; Gough, 2005; Clark, 2005; Jones, 2011). In some cases, the differences were due to individual perceptions and definitions of what constitutes wellbeing according to their human rights and development, social interactions,

health, material and financial possessions, and states of happiness (Diener et al, 1999; Suh and Oishi, 2002; Lomas, 2015). Most Western countries are seen as individualistic in opposition with some non-Western, collectivist societies, so there are cultural and contextual differences in the way that SWB is perceived (McGregor, 2006; Tov and Diener, 2013). As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) posits in his text on the history of precolonial Africa, 'individualism was not promoted in African indigenous education…' (p. 53). Other scholars term collectivism as 'kinship', describing it as the main social structure in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and reiterating the principle of sharing in happiness (Møller and Roberts, 2017). Take, for example, the philosophy of 'ubuntu' that prevails in most of the African continent. Citing Ngcoya (2009), Gade (2012) reflects on the essence of ubuntu as

> community, solidarity, caring, and sharing [advocating] a profound sense of interdependence and [emphasising] that our true human potential can only be realized in partnership with others. (p. 492)

Hence, the dichotomous categorisation of individualism and collectivism is useful in identifying respective Western and non-Western approaches. White (2015) further differentiates between the societies by stating that wellbeing for individualists is dependent on self-satisfaction and its related emotions, whereas for collectivists the emphasis is placed on fitting in, keeping good relationships within a group and maintaining the standards of the group. There have been too few SWB studies in non-Western, collective, postcolonial societies (Gough, 2005; Jones, 2011), including some in SSA, to confirm or refute the universality of the SWB approach. One can presume that in a collectivist society such as Nigeria, it is likely that social, cultural and relational interactions with others inside and outside the HE system will strongly impact the wellbeing of female students. This presumption is discussed further in the findings chapters of this thesis.

Regarding the earlier assertion from Diener (2006) around people's individually-based assessments of their own quality of life, I would surmise that SWB cannot be deemed a universal concept. Similarly, if OWB measurements and other capability valuation lists are intended to be universal and applicable in all contexts, they do not appear suited to the task as they fail to adequately 'capture agreement between different cultures and societies concerning the central components of a good life', according to Clark (2005, p. 1346). Overlooking these other cultural and societal expectations of the concept of wellbeing means that in practice, it cannot be universal. Given this, I decided to investigate a model of SWB

theory that can be applied in SSA countries such as Nigeria. Before doing so, I first review existing international research studies on wellbeing.

2.2.2 Existing Literature and Discourse on Wellbeing

Various research studies have been conducted into the wellbeing of students in several countries, including Australia, Hong Kong, Tanzania and China. Most studies are focussed on health and psychological factors, particularly the mental wellbeing of students (Lee and Loke, 2005; Rosenthal et al, 2008; Stallman, 2010; Rugira et al, 2013; Bailey and Phillips, 2015). Some of these studies involved cross-cultural research, such as between South African and other countries including the United Kingdom (Young and Campbell, 2013), Turkey (Tuzgöl-Dost, 2010) and the United States (Edwards et al, 2004), while others were a comparison of universities' engagement with student wellbeing issues within countries, for example the United Kingdom (El Ansari et al, 2011). Few studies have concentrated specifically on female students' wellbeing, although some have categorised their research findings according to gender in the Philippines (Perez, 2012), United Kingdom (Lovell et al, 2010) and in the United States (Leach et al, 1999). These studies captured ways in which academic, social and cultural environments affect the wellbeing of female students differently from male students.

In Nigeria, previous wellbeing studies addressed the relationship between wellbeing and the following factors: economic development, income or the poverty of women in rural areas (Obayelu and Awoyemi, 2010; Adeoti and Akinwande, 2013), home ownership (Adisa et al, 2000), access to public goods and citizenship (Rigon et al, 2015), welfare analysis (Oni and Adepoju, 2014), and the elderly (Adebowale et al, 2012). For young people, some wellbeing research has been linked to literacy, and educational and employment opportunities (Ushie and Udoh, 2015). Gender-related studies in the Nigerian tertiary context have mainly covered issues of women in science and technology (Aguele and Agwagah, 2007; Udeani, 2012; Eraikhuemen and Oteze, 2015), access to university for female students (Onokala and Onwurah, 2001; Fatunde, 2010b; Mukoro, 2014), female students' sexual health (Okonkwo et al, 2005; Abiodun and Balogun, 2009; Akintayo et al, 2015), and gender identity versus religion (Odejide, 2007). There is also a proliferation of studies on gender-based violence and sexual harassment (Ladebo, 2003; Nwadigwe, 2007; Iliyasu et al, 2011; Umana et al, 2014; Ibekwe,

2015). Some of the studies identified dealt with welfare management issues in Nigerian universities in the South-West and Northern states of the country students (Mahadi, 2007; Alani et al, 2010).

As demonstrated in this section, this research builds on existing international wellbeing literature on female students and from local studies on gender-based violence, sexual harassment and sexual health. However, there remains a paucity of evidence specifically on the SWB of young women at undergraduate level of tertiary education in the South-East of Nigeria.

2.2.3 Wellbeing in Low-income Contexts

In her report on gender gaps in SWB, Senik (2015) posits that particularly in high-income countries, women's experiences of life satisfaction are measured more favourably than men's, but on emotional issues, they measured at lower levels. In seeking to understand the similarities and/or differences of these results with other countries and continents, Senik draws from an objective theory-based Gallup World Poll conducted by Graham and Chattopadyay (2013). From that poll, their main finding is that

> Well-being levels are generally higher in countries with higher levels of development, and the well-being gap between men and women is also greater in countries with higher levels of development… A notable exception is SSA, where men have higher well-being levels than women for most of the years for which we have data [2005-2011]. (p. 221)

To yield cross-national and intra-national comparisons of wellbeing, Graham and Chattopadyay used intra-national criteria such as age, marital status, income, educational levels, living conditions (urban vs. rural), and gender rights within countries. Although their results appear to indicate that the wellbeing of women is lower than that of men in some SSA countries, Jones (2011) also notes that such results should be taken with some scepticism since 'in the overall SWB research landscape, relatively little is known about the subjective wellbeing of populations on [Africa,] the world's second most populous continent with the fastest

population growth rate' (p. 30). Apart from the Global Youth Wellbeing Index[5] report published by the International Youth Foundation, other international guidance relating to wellbeing for young people in Africa are the global millennium and sustainable development goals established by the United Nations in 2000 and 2015 (UNESCO, 2016). Details of these global goals are discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

Highlighting the relevance of the wellbeing concept and discourse in international development and cross-cultural research, Gough et al (2006) stress the importance of flexibility and plurality in wellbeing studies. Following this recommendation, the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) Research Group was established with the aim to 'develop a conceptual and methodological framework for understanding the social and cultural construction of wellbeing in specific countries' (White, 2006 p. 1), often including issues of inequality. WeD's approach to SWB involves participation through bottom-up research as a way of enabling the underprivileged to examine issues and raise consciousness (Gough et al, 2006). This link between SWB research and participatory methods is suitable for the Nigerian context and informed my selection of the framework developed by White (2010) for WeD (see Diagram 2.1).

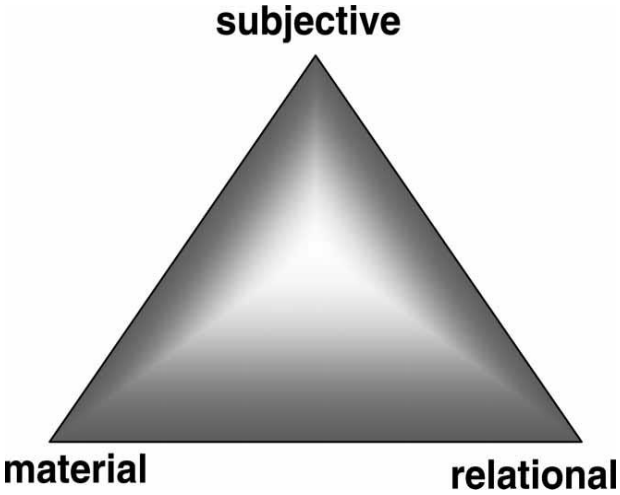


Diagram 2.1: White's dimensions of wellbeing

[5] 'The Global Youth Wellbeing Index gathers and connects youth-related data to assess and compare the state of young people's wellbeing around the world.' Source: https://www.iyfnet.org/library/2017-global-youth-wellbeing-index

This SWB framework has three dimensions: namely subjective, relational and material. These are briefly explained as follows:

Subjective – people's perceptions of their positions, whether material, social or human; cultural values; ideologies and beliefs;
Relational – social relations and access to public goods; human capabilities, political identities, attitudes to life and personal relationships;
Material – assets, welfare and standards of living.

According to White, the pyramid shape of the dimensions denotes their inter-relational dependence on each other, shown in the way that certain perceptions and beliefs, social connections and material elements make up one's wellbeing. For example, having a good network of support (social) as well as the availability of secure accommodation (material) is likely to contribute to an individual's sense of physical health and satisfaction (subjective).

It is important to acknowledge that White (2015) later revised this SWB framing to 'relational wellbeing [as] a theoretical and operational approach… to people as subjects who are formed within a specific social and cultural context' (pp. 1, 3). She identifies the positivist epistemological of the first framework, evident in its quantitative methodology and grounding in static, scientific approaches which have an 'arrival' point. In contrast, the updated version is interpretivist, qualitative, politically-grounded and viewed as a process. I would argue that the original SWB framework is neither positivist nor static, but instead, it can be deemed as relativist depending on the context being studied. For example, the social dimension of SWB inevitably requires interaction with others. I maintain the use of White's (2010) original framework rather than the updated (2015) version because of the simplicity of its dimensions, which are likely to be more relatable to my research context. The 2010 framework has also been used in similar contexts in the Global South such as Bangladesh and Zambia (White, 2009; White, 2010). Moreover, as discussed in Section 1.3 on the RQs, I am interested first in the views that the female students have of their own wellbeing, before exploring any external influences or conceptualisations about it.

Notwithstanding these arguments, I submit that White's (2010) SWB framework neglects social justice by paying insufficient attention to issues of power, status and representation. Even in her suggestion that relational wellbeing transcends individuality in favour of relationships, White (2015) does not discuss the effects of power in these relationships. This is where the social justice aspect of the capability approach comes in, as will be discussed in

Sections 2.3 and 2.4.1. The CA adds to and works with SWB in enabling an understanding of wellbeing as a human freedom (Robeyns, 2017). The approach also addresses *conversion factors* which are useful in understanding the opportunity freedoms that the research participants have for converting basic resources into valued functionings. Moreover, the CA recognises the concept of *adaptive preferences* where the agency, freedoms and choices available to the research participants are affected by their limited opportunities including externally imposed social barriers in the Nigerian HE context (see Section 2.4 for a further discussion on the CA).

The use of both SWB and CA as theoretical frameworks for this study is congruent with the argument made by some scholars that there is a blurring between the different wellbeing theories (Gough, 2005; Gasper, 2007; Jones, 2011; Taylor, 2015). They suggest that this may be the result of wellbeing's interdisciplinary outlook, which cuts across health, social science, psychology, education and economics. This blurring could also be due to the interrelated and multi-dimensional terms used, for example health or wellness or vitality. They also maintain that since it is impossible to remain within one theory, this has led to some mixed theory research such as this study.

2.3 Social Justice in Education

According to Ballenger (2010 p. 4), the 'definition of social justice is a shifting concept' and therefore the term has a multiplicity of descriptions dependent on context. In the thesis introduction, I started off by conceptualising social justice as promoting good societal values including fairness, diversity and equality of opportunity whilst challenging discrimination and inequity (Robinson, 2016). Conversely, social justice theorist Young (2004) describes injustice as two types of restricting limitations on people, namely 'oppression and domination' (p. 39). This would therefore mean that social justice involves the freedom to develop and use individual abilities for communal interaction and shared collaboration. Young further explains that oppression usually involves five features: 'exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence' (ibid, p. 40). Some of these features are addressed in Chapters 5 to 8 of this thesis, as they relate to the female students' perceptions and experiences of wellbeing.

In acknowledging the value and importance of education for wellbeing, the United Nations (2010) states that

> Education impacts skills and competencies that are central to human development and enhanced quality of life, bringing wide-ranging benefits to both individuals and societies… Education has long been recognized as a fundamental right with far-reaching impacts on human development and social progress. (p. 43)

I would argue that if, as the United Nations suggests, education is to bring about the enhancement of wellbeing in order to promote human development and social progress, then issues of social justice within the education system itself need to be appropriately addressed. For an educational institution to be inclusive, all stakeholders should have an input to produce the best outcome for themselves. As Bell (1997) posits, the goal of education for social justice is the 'full and equal participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs' (p. 3). Participation in HEIs therefore requires that the leadership team, staff and industry or public partners take part in adopting and implementing academic and environmental policies and practices that result in beneficial experiences for the students (Walker, 2019). Moreover, HE students need the freedom and agency to be able to participate in social and political processes; the onus is on each educational institution to adopt an inclusive social justice framework, but this should also be carried out with the involvement of the students. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) maintain that the institution should develop students as citizens that can collectively provide solutions to systemic socio-political and economic problems and bring about change. Murrell (2006) also argues that institutions should be willing to acknowledge and eliminate any existing oppressive actions and disparities in their rules and regulations. As cautioned by Tikly and Barrett (2011) however, focusing solely on the institutional barriers in my research context may lead to ignoring other preventative factors which are both historical and ongoing and related to cultural, traditional and societal issues. This also supports my decision to use postcolonial feminism as a lens through which to explore these issues at UniSEN, and the CA to achieve some form of epistemic justice as a capability (Walker, 2019) for female students in HE. As I go on to discuss in the following sections, the CA uses postcolonial and feminist views to critique the historical and social forms of power that hinder an individual's capabilities (DeJaeghere, 2020).

2.4 The Capability Approach to Wellbeing

> The capability approach has in recent decades emerged as a new theoretical framework about wellbeing, freedom to achieve wellbeing, and all the public values in which either of these can play a role, such as development and social justice. (Robeyns 2016a, p. 23)

The capability approach developed by Sen (1999), comprises of two elements – capabilities and functionings. Sen expresses capability as a substantial or positive freedom; he includes, political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. Capabilities are therefore the freedoms or opportunities that a person has in order to accomplish their functionings, according to Robeyns (2011). She further defines functionings as what human beings are able to be and to do; in the case of students, for example, this may include being safe (able to be) and writing examinations (able to do). Nussbaum (2000) extends these ideas with a list of ten central human functional capabilities covering life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, and control over one's environment. I use this list as a starting point from which to study the female students' capabilities.

Nussbaum (2000) further described human capabilities as a combination of personal inward traits and the abilities developed from interacting with external environments, thereby giving an individual 'the totality of the opportunities she has for choice and action in her specific political, social, and economic situation' (p. 21). This choice and action are also related to agency as I later discuss.

Nussbaum's list of functional capabilities has been criticised as aligning with objective list theories, which are generally judged to be prescriptive, authoritarian, idealist, static and/or abstract (Seligman and Royzman, 2003; Molyneux, 2007; Badhwar, 2014; DeJaeghere, 2015; Crisp, 2016). Objective list theories have also been criticised for being Eurocentric in their implicit assumptions about human nature. Within the context, this research refutes some of these critiques and, as previously mentioned, I submit that Nussbaum's list provides a useful starting point for exploring these issues and debating which capabilities are central. In the Nigerian HEI context, for example, the list helps to identify the capabilities that can be used to strive for social justice by disrupting unequal practices (DeJaeghere, 2020). A further

suggestion made by Crisp (2016) is that the list is 'elitist, since they [the listed capabilities] appear to be claiming that certain things are good for people, even if those people will not enjoy them, and do not even want them' (para. 48). I argue that while some of the items in Nussbaum's list may diverge from the female students' perceptions of their own wellbeing or lived experiences, the prevailing patriarchal, cultural and contextual disadvantages that they face in Nigerian HEIs play an important role in determining their capabilities. I therefore focus on the valued functionings in Nussbaum's list that relate to the female students' specific experiences.

According to DeJaeghere (2015), another critique of the list-based approach such as Nussbaum's is the limitation it creates in engaging fully with issues of agency and aspiration. *Agency* is defined within the CA as being able to pursue one's valued goals, having been given the substantial freedom or opportunities to do so (Robeyns, 2011). As Sen (1992) also posits, agency and freedom are paramount values to have because they have a direct impact on wellbeing. I would argue that Nussbaum (2000) refutes DeJaeghere's (2015) critique, for example, using political agency to express the importance of recognising people as citizens that are

> worthy of concern and respect… [who should be treated] as sources of agency and worth in their own right, with their own plans to make and their own lives to live, therefore as deserving of all necessary support for their equal opportunity to be such agents. (p. 58)

In this study, therefore, agency refers to the extent to which a female student in a Nigerian university can act to empower herself and to effect changes to her own wellbeing (Odejide, 2007; Drydyk, 2013).

The CA also addresses adaptive preferences particularly in relation to women's agency and the empowerment of vulnerable persons or disadvantaged groups (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum 2000; Teschl and Comim, 2005; Khader, 2011). A partial definition of adaptive preferences is 'preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing… that are formed under conditions nonconducive to basic flourishing' (Khader, 2011 p. 2). In other words, adaptive preference occurs when an individual adjusts their choices or decisions according to the options that are available to them and not as a result of their own agentic values. Part of this study thus

explores how female undergraduate students in Nigeria make wellbeing choices and adapt their preferences in response to cultural, historical, academic and other contextual factors.

The CA is a useful framework for investigating 'conversion factors – how resources are translated into capabilities' (Unterhalter, 2009 p. 217) as well as identifying which wellbeing capabilities are deficient due to a lack of opportunity freedoms. Robeyns (2017) further describes three forms of conversion factors as personal, social and environmental. Using these three forms, I will also consider the extent to which a female university student in Nigeria is able to achieve her functionings (beings and doings) by converting factors such as personal characteristics (gender, reading and writing skills), social resources (hierarchies, cultural norms, discriminatory biases, power structures) and environmental influences (location, amenities). This provides another rationale for using the CA to assess some educational inequalities that are not fully covered by the SWB framework. This is discussed in the following section.

2.4.1 The Capability Approach as a Theory of Justice

Alkire and Deneulin (2009) argue that 'the capability approach has often been mistaken for a theory of justice, which it is not' (p. 42). However, Robeyns (2017), citing Nussbaum (2006), maintains that it does indeed provide 'a partial and minimal account of social justice' (p. 153). Robeyns (2017) further suggests that several issues need to be considered to enable the development of the CA as a complete theory of justice, one of which is to ascertain which capabilities are the most important (ibid). She posits that

> the capability approach is not a theory that can *explain* poverty, inequality and well-being; instead, it rather provides a tool and a framework within which to *conceptualize* and *evaluate* these phenomena. (Robeyns, 2005 p. 94)

In addition to its use for assessing a person's quality of life, the CA is employed in my study as a basic social justice framework. According to Nussbaum (2000), the question of each person's ability to be and to do promotes a sense of human dignity and justice for a person. Furthermore, the CA 'takes each person as an end, is focused on choice or freedom' (p. 18) – not just for wellbeing but also regarding the availability of opportunities. These are likely to be impeded by 'entrenched social injustice and inequality, especially those as a result of

discrimination and marginalization' (Nussbaum 2011, p. 19). Applying these statements to my study suggests that the female students should have opportunities to maintain a positive wellbeing state for themselves, along with the freedom of choice and agency to ensure that they do not experience any form of unjust or unequal treatment. Walker (2019) proposes that these opportunities and freedoms are an 'epistemic capability' that is

> developed through a range of collective pedagogical encounters which involve sharing information and forms of social understanding, and in which we are both givers and receivers in making meaning, in other words through participation in epistemic practices we develop as epistemic agents and advance epistemic justice. (p. 222)

This will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 7.

In relation to social justice, earlier critiques of the CA include its tendency to generalise by not being sensitive to context (Unterhalter, 2005). In this study, contextual issues such as the postcolonial, cultural and traditional perceptions and expectations of women in Nigeria still promote certain gender injustices (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5 for detailed discussions of this). Furthermore, the CA was judged as overly individualistic for not considering the 'dimensions of group based social mobilisation for democratisation and gender equality' (Unterhalter, 2005 p. 28). Again, this would apply to SSA countries that have been identified as collectivist societies, where individuals are integrated into groups and therefore personal interests are dominated by group interests (Mushibwe, 2009; Hofstede, 2011). Rather than this collectivist culture, African feminist scholars prefer to focus on the importance of relationships between African women and to understand how collective capabilities work in postcolonial contexts (Oyewumi, 1997; Arndt, 2002; Osirim et al, 2008; Nkenkana, 2015; Ahidjo-Iya, 2019). In this study, I am specifically interested in understanding how the CA acknowledges the impact of different kinds of inequality and the operation of power within the Nigerian HEI context.

According to Calitz (2016), scholars have applied the CA to areas of HE throughout the global educational context, such as to support social justice pedagogy, policy and practice; to increase widening participation in the United Kingdom; to offer equal participation for disadvantaged and at-risk students; to provide capability lists for undergraduate students; and to promote education for the public good. In addition to its uses for basic social justice and comparative quality of life studies, the CA can be employed to analyse other public values such as

institutional efficiency and sustainability (Robeyns, 2016b). Chapters 6 and 8 include a deeper discussion of these applications.

One underlying aim of this study is to determine how gender balance issues are framed in Nigerian HEIs, and to understand whether female students are subjected to 'the continuing and still deeply entrenched patterns of gender inequality in educational institutions and society' (Walker 2003, p. 171). The following section on gender justice addresses this aim.

2.4.2 Wellbeing Capabilities and Gender Justice

Gender equality is a human right that is an integral part of social justice (Mlambo Ngcuka, 2015), and is often used interchangeably with *gender justice*. Similar to social justice, there have been various attempts to conceptualise the term gender justice. According to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (2010), gender justice involves

> ending the inequalities between women and men that are produced and reproduced in the family, the community, the market and the state. It also requires that mainstream institutions — from justice to economic policymaking — are accountable for tackling the injustice and discrimination that keep too many women poor and excluded. (p. 3)

This implies that justice is not only weighted *against* women but, as previously discussed, the responsibility for ensuring fairness and equity for women is placed at the decision-making level of organised establishments. For this study, therefore, I assume a working definition of gender justice as fairness and equity for and towards female students in the context of Nigerian HEIs.

Justice also demands participation as peers in different areas of interaction, for instance, within families, institutions or the public arena (Fraser, 2007). Consequently, any social situation or contextual interaction that exploits, deprives or excludes female students and causes disparities between them and their male peers will lead to gender injustice in 'representation, identity, and difference' (p. 24). In this study, I will also analyse the differences of experiences between male and female students in relation to personal agency[6], the influences of power

[6] 'Personal agency refers to one's capability to originate and direct actions for given purposes' (Zimmerman and Cleary, 2006 p. 45).

structures on women at the university, the gender balance in student representation, and the recognition of issues that impact wellbeing as different sexes (see Chapters 5 to 8). Fraser (2007), a gender justice theorist, further describes these issues as 'institutionalized patterns of cultural value' (p. 27), indicating that to attain social value, regard or appreciation, the organisation or group must accord equal opportunity and respect to all its stakeholders, thereby increasing parity of participation. This may necessitate a *redistribution* and *recognition* of gender justice – the two dimensions that she suggests. Fraser describes redistribution as a remedy to the political and economic injustices that beset women, whereas recognition questions the 'status of women as full partners in social interaction' (Fraser, 2007 p. 39). These ideas will be discussed further in Chapters 6 to 8.

Gender justice is necessary for the wellbeing of female students to be actualised. As Unterhalter (2017) posits, 'Gender equality [or justice] in education is linked with wellbeing, agency, aspects of embodiment and lack of violence, knowledge and criticality, public good, social relationships and context' (p. 8). When women are excluded and unjustly controlled, this injustice reduces their agency, undermines their voice and denies them of their autonomous rights (ibid). When they are abused, they are more vulnerable, both physically and emotionally.

In Nigeria, the concept of gender justice has been used as a tool to evaluate practices for enhancing women's citizenship (Mama, 2007), to minimise the effects of religion and culture on gender equality (Para-Mallam, 2010), to advocate for fair representation in communication education and practice (Ashong and Batta, 2011), and to fight for women's human rights, against child marriage and widowhood practices, as well as for the legal protection of the girl child (Odiaka, 2013). Other gender justice studies in educational research focused on the injustices perpetuated through an unequal distribution of resources and a lack of empowerment of girls in the North regarding their rights to education (Unterhalter et al, 2013); also regarding academics' representation and research productivity (Opesadea et al, 2017). However, I am yet to find any gender justice studies that relate to student wellbeing.

Regarding gender justice, the CA has been employed as a tool for transformative change in education, for instance by Aikman and Unterhalter (2013) who address quality in education through teaching and learning, and the multiple sources of inequality that threaten the rights

of women. They discuss gendered hierarchies and social divisions within educational settings which lead to the reproduction of inequality, the ways of teaching the curriculum and their impact on female students' learning, and the challenges of gender inclusion, bias, and empowerment as highlighted by the CA. These issues are relevant to this study (see Chapters 5 to 8). Using Nigerian universities as an example, Ilesanmi (2016) recommends the accelerated achievement of gender equality for sustainable development, particularly in relation to the agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals[7] (SDGs; further discussed in Section 3.3) for year 2030. His recommendations involve the acknowledgement, expansion and recognition of the value of women's capabilities, and he calls for women 'to demand the same opportunities, resources and responsibilities as men' (Ilesanmi, 2016 p. 7). This call is also necessary in the context of this study, given the findings from the female students' experiences, their involvement in equitable access to resources and opportunities, and their wellbeing capabilities. Walker and Loots (2017) also conducted a similar participatory evaluation of gender inequalities at a rural university in South Africa using the CA, hence I find the coupling of the CA and gender equality useful for my study.

2.5 Linking the Theories to the Research Questions and Methodology

Since this research study uses White's SWB and Nussbaum's CA as intersecting theories with which to frame the lived experiences of female undergraduate students in Nigeria, I present in this section the ways in which they relate to the RQs and the research methodology.

RQ1 explores the perceptions and experiences of the female students regarding their wellbeing capabilities, and then deploys a combination of White's (2010)'s SWB dimensions (subjective, material and relational) and some of Nussbaum's (2000) list of capabilities to address them. Nussbaum also suggests that the external circumstances and options of women affect their 'inner lives... what they hope for, what they love, what they fear, as well as what they are able to do' (p. 31).

[7] 'The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal set of goals, targets and indicators that United Nations member states will use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years.' (Ndaruhutse and Thompson, 2016 p. 16)

RQ2 investigates any wider contextual influences, or barriers to gender equity upon the participants' capabilities and the quality of their lived experiences. It considers underlying norms and structures that promote and/or enable inequalities, whether societal, cultural, institutional, postcolonial, environmental or systemic, as outlined in both theoretical frameworks.

Gender justice is closely linked to feminist research, which involves social equality and transformation for women. According to Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007), the goals of feminist research are to

> foster empowerment and emancipation for women and other marginalized groups… by documenting [their] lives, experiences, and concerns, illuminating gender-based stereotypes and biases, and unearthing women's subjugated knowledge, feminist research challenges the basic structures and ideologies that oppress women.' (p. 4)

The said structures and ideologies will be determined in this study through the narratives of the participants. The postcolonial lens further determines the struggles and complexities of the lives of young female undergraduate students in Nigeria, a country with enduring colonial legacies (see Chapters 1 and 3) by giving voice to their experiences of marginalisation and disadvantage (Struckmann, 2018). This study achieves these stories through dialogue and reflection with the participants (Unterhalter, 2005) using a critical participatory methodology (see Section 4.2.3). In addition, the SWB and CA theoretical frameworks are used in the deductive part of data analysis as well as in consideration of the ethical values that underpin the study.

> Unlike colonialization, the coloniality of gender is still with us… [It] enables me to understand the oppressive imposition as a complex interaction of economic, racializing and gendering systems in which every person in the colonial encounter can be found as a live, historical fully described being. (Lugones, 2010 pp. 746, 747)

Lugones argues that the end of a period of colonisation does not indicate the same of the resulting colonial system which positions gender, intersecting with ethnicity and class, as a social construction that creates divisions between people in postcolonial contexts. Therefore in addressing RQ2 and the continuing effects of colonial rule on the lives of women in Nigeria

(see Chapter 3), it is necessary to discuss the concept of coloniality[8] – the living legacy of colonialism within socio-cultural systems that reinforces economic discriminations, knowledge production and Eurocentric norms and values (Quijano, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). It has been further argued by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014) that global coloniality comprises of three interrelated features, namely the coloniality of power, of knowledge and of being, which hinder African peoples' agency, cause them to replicate colonial systems, and prevent them from recreating a better future for the continent. Thus, it is important to include here the current discourse on decolonisation and decoloniality in Africa and its relevance to this study. While Chilisa et al (2017) refer to decolonisation as 'a critique of the dominance of Euro-Western language and thought, cultural and academic imperialism' (p. 327), decoloniality encapsulates the struggle for freedom for formerly colonised peoples and provokes a different way of thinking, of knowing and of doing (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Numerous African and international scholars have and continue to advocate for the dismantling of colonial structures of power through decoloniality, and they call for the inclusion of Afrocentric and indigenous history, knowledges and knowledge production through decolonisation. This involves areas such as education (including academia, the curriculum, students), gender and peacebuilding, the mind, languages, human rights and disability (Wa Thiong'o, 1998; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, 2015, 2017; Grech, 2015; Hudson, 2016; Adebisi, 2016; Zembylas, 2017). Given the substantive topic of study also, Section 8.1 discusses how female students' wellbeing can be supported through decolonising women in postcolonial Africa (Nkenkana, 2015).

Summary

In this chapter, I have detailed the historical foundations of wellbeing, its descriptions and theories, narrowing down to the choice of a subjective wellbeing framework with which to conduct this study. I also covered the capability approach as a theoretical framework to support subjective wellbeing. The chapter reviewed previous international studies on subjective wellbeing and the capability approach which helped to ascertain a gap in the

[8] Maldonado-Torres (2007) differentiates coloniality from colonialism, describing the former as 'long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism.' (p. 243)

literature on female undergraduate students' wellbeing in Nigeria. I further expounded on the relationship between social justice and education (with a focus on women) and linked these to the capability approach to wellbeing. References were made to Nigeria as the context of study in relation to both frameworks. The chapter culminated with a synthesis of the theoretical frameworks and the research questions, as well as the philosophical, methodological design and the data analysis.

-3- Nigeria as a Research Context

Overview

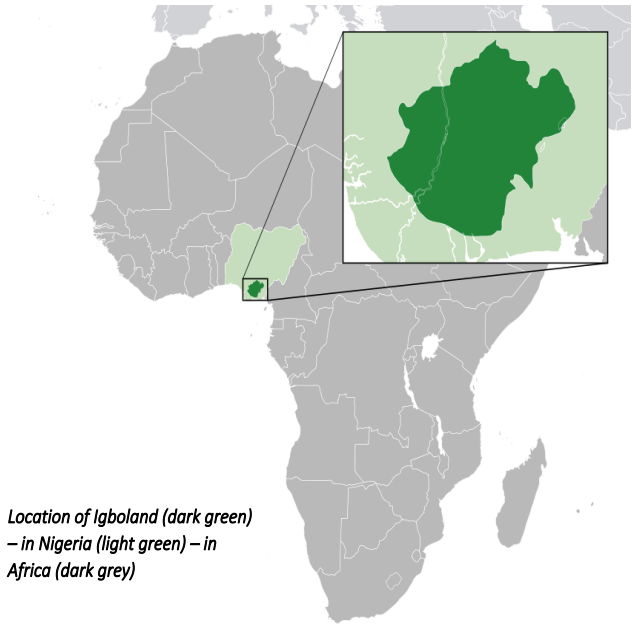


Diagram 3.1: Location of Igboland

Nigeria is a country located in West Africa which is comprised of 37 states, including the Federal Capital Territory. The states are divided into six geo-political zones, namely the North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-West, South-East and South-South. This research study was conducted in the South-East of Nigeria (pictured to the left[9]), a region known predominantly as Igboland, where the Igbo language is the mother tongue.

This chapter contextualises the study of wellbeing for female undergraduate students in South-East Nigeria. It delves into the colonial history of Nigeria that gave partial rise to patriarchal traditions which devalue women in society. The chapter therefore also establishes the basis for demands for social justice for women in Nigeria. I elaborate upon the issues of inequality faced by female staff and students in her higher education institutions, which include gender discrimination, stereotyping and gender-based violence. The chapter ends with a focus on the University of the South-East of Nigeria as the chosen case study institution.

[9] Source: By NuclearVacuum - BlankMap-Africa2.svg, CC0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29194826

3.1 The Postcolonial Condition of Nigeria

Nigeria was colonised by Britain from 1900 to 1960 when she gained her independence (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). The country was, until 2017, referred to as one of the 'developing', 'third world' or 'low-income' nations in Africa or the Global South by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations (Fernholz, 2016). Although now identified as a lower-middle income economy, I adopt the term 'postcolonial' for this study, and use it in two ways: first, in reference to the period following Nigerian independence from British colonial rule; second, relating to postcolonial scholarship by highlighting the condition of people in countries impacted by colonial rule (Olarewaju, 2018). As discussed in Chapter 1, women in Nigeria still suffer the impacts of enduring colonial legacies (Tikly, 2004). In this study therefore, I decided to use postcolonial feminism as a theoretical perspective that has implications for epistemology in order to acknowledge the voices of disadvantaged and vulnerable young women who remain subject to patriarchal power (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012). An extensive discussion of postcolonial feminism is also included in Chapter 4.

Cultural norms and historical influences from the colonial period have not only translated to gender exploitation, but also affected Nigeria's education system. Olarewaju (2018) describes pre-colonial forms of education in Nigeria as non-formal, community-based, indigenous and non-religious. Since it was the colonisers that established Western schooling, pedagogy and teaching content in most African colonies, a postcolonial approach is required to deconstruct the colonial legacy left in the Nigerian education system (Crossley and Tikly, 2004; Olarewaju, 2018). In this postcolonial period, rather than using the term colonialism, some influences in the field of education are often conceptualised as internationalisation[10] or globalisation. Knight (2003) proffers a '…definition of globalization [as] the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas… across borders' (p. 2). She further argues that globalisation's effects on a country's education system depends on that nation's historical, traditional and cultural environment and priorities (ibid). Take, for example, the growing

[10] 'Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education' (Knight, 2003 p. 2).

impact of the Confucius Institutes which fund classes in Chinese/Mandarin language and culture. They provide scholarships to students in 515 primary, secondary and universities worldwide, some of which are currently located in Nigeria and are rapidly expanding to other contexts (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2014). This development, coupled with scepticism of the motives of China regarding economic aid to and educational investment in African countries, has led to increasing fears of neo-colonialism[11] by China (Yuan, 2011; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011; Zhao, 2014; King, 2014; Okolo and Akwu, 2016; Pong and Feng, 2017). To consider the continued effects of colonialism therefore, it is necessary that

> a postcolonial critique draws attention to the transnational aspects of globalisation and of social inequalities and seeks to highlight forms of resistance to Western [or in this case, Eastern/Southern] global hegemony as they have manifested themselves in education. (Tikly, 2001 p. 152)

3.1.1 Patriarchy in African Culture and Tradition

According to Nwako (2016), issues of gender development as well as women and girls' empowerment are continuously debated amongst scholars and education stakeholders including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2003), Fennell and Arnot (2008), the World Bank (2011) and the OECD (2015). Countries in the SSA are not exempt from this debate (Browne and Barrett, 1991; Odaga and Hanneveld 1995; Kivula-Ndunda, 2000; OXFAM, 2005; Annin, 2009; Iverson, 2012; Milligan, 2014). Some scholars also reiterate the importance of deploying discourses of gender justice (discussed in Chapter 2) because of the sustained effects of traditional, patriarchal, societal and institutional maltreatment against women in Nigeria and other African communities (Stephens, 2000; Mushibwe, 2009; Egun and Tibi, 2010; Ofoha, 2013).

In her seminal piece on pre-colonial indigenous societies in South-East Nigeria, Amadiume (1987) states that

> in the traditional society, a flexible gender system meant that male roles were open to certain categories of women through such practices as *nhaye*, 'male daughters,' *igba ohu*, 'female husbands. These institutions placed women in a more favourable position for the acquisition of wealth and formal political power

[11] According to Cox (2007), neo-colonialism 'can be used to describe the condition of those whose lives are shaped by the institutions of economic globalisation' (p. 99).

> and authority. Under colonialism, these indigenous institutions – condemned by the Church as 'pagan' and anti-Christian – were abandoned or reinterpreted to the detriment of women. (p. 123)

Thus, patriarchy is sometimes claimed to have emerged from colonialism (Guerrero, 2003; Mama, 2006; Aina, 2014), and does not favour women. Citing Giddens and Duneier (2000), Anele (2010) defined patriarchy as:

> male dominance in a society. They further argued that, 'there are no known societies that are not patriarchal, although the degree and character of inequalities between the sexes varies considerably cross-culturally.' (p. 66)

Moreover, context-dependent power structures differ within individual relationships, in families, local communities and organisations (Makama, 2013; Napikoski and Johnson Lewis, 2017). Anele (2010) documents an active patriarchal shift from private relationships and violence in male dominated households to the oppression of women in the public sphere. This study partly captures the position of females in African culture and tradition as inferior to males (Nwaoku and Efanga, 2011; Alabi et al, 2014; Ezedike, 2016). Examples of such patriarchal power imbalances, both formal and informal, are noted throughout this study; they are apparent in the unjust and discriminatory expressions, practices and opportunities accorded to male and female students in the research context. These contextual arguments form the basis of deploying a postcolonial feminist lens through which to conduct this study (detailed in Chapter 4).

3.2 Gender Equality and Equity

As of 2013, the Nigerian population was made up of 174 million people, 49.5% of whom are female (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS 2014). Despite this narrow gap in the sexes, neither gender equality nor gender equity have been achieved in most areas of livelihood, at work and in society in general. Reeves and Baden (2000) posit a distinction between gender equality and gender equity – the former as 'women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere', and the latter referring to 'the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognising their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources' (p.2). In this study, both terms

are used as the research will cover the equality of opportunities available for female students in comparison with those available for males, as well as whether the outcomes from resource distribution in Nigerian HEIs are equitable for both sexes.

As a member country of the United Nations General Assembly, Nigeria adopted the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW; UNESCO, 2014) in 1985. The Convention articles particularly refer to issues that are most likely to affect the wellbeing of female students and promote equality between men and women, including discrimination, the guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, sex role stereotyping and prejudice, political representation, health, education and social benefits. Other relevant international agreements signed by Nigeria are the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (African Union, 2003) and the Millennium Development Goals[12] (MDGs). The latter lasted from 2000 to 2015 and was replaced by the SDGs in 2016 (see Section 3.3).

These notwithstanding, Ahmad-Kano (2009) suggests that 'day-to-day life for women in Nigeria is shaped less by international conventions than it is by the diverse cultures, traditions and religions found in the country' (para. 1), denoting an intersection between gender issues and other forms of difference and inequality. For example, in the Northern part of Nigeria, which is predominantly Muslim, girls are hindered from accessing education due to several reasons, including cultural and religious beliefs on early marriage, domestic work, pregnancy, and parental preference to train the boys, among others (United Nations Children's Fund, 2007; Unterhalter and Heslop, 2012; Ofoha, 2013). This diversity prompted Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to develop her own National Gender Policy aiming not only to empower women but also to eliminate the harmful practices that are used to discriminate against women (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006). However, many imbalances still exist between men and women in areas of political participation, economic empowerment and education. For instance, from the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, Nigeria ranked 128 out of 153 countries (World Economic Forum, 2019).

[12] Goal 3 of the MDGs was concerned with the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (United Nations, 2015a).

Regarding equal opportunities in employment and work conditions, there are numerous barriers that prevent women from achieving development, including family commitments. Likewise, in the political arena and governance, the marginal contributions by women in decision-making and in the allocation of resources have been detrimental to their participation in nation building (United Nations, 2010). In recognition of these persistent obstacles, the African Union has formed an agenda of seven aspirations for 'The Africa We Want' by the year 2063 (African Union Commission, 2015). Aspiration 6, comprising of points 47 to 58, is linked to the SDGs and aims to empower women and youth on the continent in areas such as decision making, gender parity and 'in all aspects of development, including social, economic, political and environmental' (p. 8). This aspiration, together with the afore-mentioned power imbalances in gender roles, inform and motivate this study to reduce gender inequalities in Nigerian HEIs.

In the next section, I will focus on gender equity in the HE context.

3.2.1 Women in Nigerian Higher Education

> The university is not a gender-neutral environment. Rather, gender disparity within the larger civil society also permeates the university space and determines women's positionality.
> (Ukpokolo, 2010 pp. 1-2)

In this section, I will discuss the gender gaps highlighted by Ukpokolo's statement above first in relation to female staff and subsequently for female students. As of 2018, there are 163 universities in Nigeria: 41 Federal, 47 State, and 75 Private (National Universities Commission, 2018). Aina (2014), citing figures from the Quality Assurance Department of the National Universities Commission, reports that only one-third (30.7%) of academic staff in Nigerian universities were women. Compared to male higher-level degree holders, female teaching staff obtained 26.4% and 24.4% of master and doctorate qualifications respectively (NBS, 2014).

According to the Equality Report published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2003), the quality of education is sometimes dependent upon the quality and balance of sexes within the teaching staff, which in turn promotes gender parity and equal opportunities for both male and female students. This suggests that there are

differences in teaching and learning styles, abilities and qualifications between male and female staff which in turn would favour either male or female students. For example, due to gender stereotypes, girls are generally underrepresented in subjects such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM); as a result, there is evidence to show that they are encouraged and inspired when they interact with female teachers in these areas (Bettinger and Long, 2005; Kulturel-Konak et al, 2011; Akinsowon and Osisanwo, 2014, Cin and Walker, 2016). In effect, gender equality in the representation of male and female staff contributes to fairness and social justice in education. As stated in the last section, girls in some areas in Nigeria are marginalised and excluded from education for cultural, intergenerational, religious and familial reasons (Para-Mallam, 2010; Nwaoku and Efanga, 2011; Ofoha, 2013; Adebayo and Akanle, 2014). To counter this, UNESCO (2003) proposes that,

> as the proportion of female teachers increases from low levels, girls' enrolment rises relative to boys. The feminization of the teaching profession particularly in states where women have lower socio-economic status can serve as an empowering tool for young women to pursue their studies, and for parents to choose to educate the girls. (p. 16)

Most female university staff in Nigeria face gender discrimination not only in access to employment and unequal pay and conditions, but also in research opportunities and productivity (Ogbogu, 2009). Other areas of disadvantage include being treated as subordinates, unequal access to training and resources (Odejide et al., 2005; Bakari and Leach, 2007), and in their aspirations for promotion to leadership positions (gender stereotyping itself is discussed later in this chapter).

Similarly, Aina's (2014) data demonstrates that women make up 15.6% of the total number of professors in Nigeria, 24.7% principal officers, 16.9% of governing council members and 18.3% of deans or directors. For example, at UniSEN, the context for this study, there is currently only one woman out of a total of 12 members of the Governing Council (UniSEN, 2016). Anele (2010) particularly indicts such discrimination in her assessment, stating that 'Social exclusion and marginalisation meted out to women in the university system are even more glaring when we consider the appointment of principal officers' (p. 74).

Other scholars have alluded to gender stereotyping as the main barrier which has prevented women from attaining positions of leadership in academia (Udegbe, 2005; Ikwuegbe, 2006;

Adegun, 2012). According to Alade (2012), gender stereotyping refers to 'a collection of commonly held beliefs or opinions about behaviours and activities considered by society as appropriate for male and female' (p. 32). Examples of gender stereotypes in Nigerian universities include the consideration of management roles as *masculine* and assumptions of women's lack of interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics courses, to name a few (Yusuff, 2014). The stereotyping of female students in this study is discussed in the findings (see Chapters 5 and 6), and briefly addressed in the next section.

3.2.2 What about the Female Students?

Regarding university student enrolment, statistics by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB, 2009; 2016) show that between 2003 and 2014, males made up 57.2% of student enrolment and females 42.8%. When broken down into subject areas, a similar disparity remains: for example, the ratio of males to females for the social sciences in 2010/2011 was 66.5% to 33.5% (Aina, 2016). As a result, Nigeria has not been acknowledged as one of the countries that had met MDG number 3 – the promotion of gender equality in all educational levels and in women's empowerment[13] (MDG Monitor, 2015). However, Fatunde (2010b) contends that female student numbers rose from 7.7% at Nigeria's independence from colonial rule in 1960 to 45% in 2009. He goes further to contextualise the disparity in male to female ratios across the country; in the Northern Muslim-dominated areas for example, 'girls tend to be married off early by their parents, so both Koranic and Western-type tertiary institutions have a high number of male students' (para. 12). He also explains that it is a very different picture in the South where HE is highly rated by parents and qualifications are valued; hence, the South-West region records the highest number of private universities. In the South-East (the context of this study), the enrolment gap between male and female students is minimal, as Fatunde (2010b), citing Rebecca Samuel (an academic), also posits that,

> Parents from the poor urban and rural zones encourage men to go into petty trading at a very early age to look after their extended families. They send females to university while the boys' dream is to become big-time businessmen. (para. 11)

[13] Tertiary education in Nigeria comprises four forms of higher education institutions namely, universities, monotechnics, polytechnics, and colleges of education (World Education Services, 2017).

Given this situation in the South-East, Fatunde considers it likely that male students will be outnumbered in the not-too-distant future.

The Students' Welfare and Gender Issues Division of the National Universities Commission in Nigeria is responsible for campus safety, communications services and gender issues on university campuses. Part of the division's mandate is to

> facilitate the development and integration of Gender Education in the Nigerian University System and monitor the implementation of Government policies on gender and other related issues in Nigerian Universities; and facilitate and ensure the evolution of advocacy programmes on gender equity in Nigerian in line with best practices. (National Universities Commission, 2018 para. 7, 8)

Unfortunately, I have been unable to gather any evidence to date on how and where this mandate has been implemented.

Gender-based violence is a widespread phenomenon across Nigeria and occurs at all levels of society – within families, communities and institutions but also at local, state and national tiers of government (Okemini and Adekola, 2012). Some reported cases of gender-based violence that are harmful to women include widowhood practices (Ilika and Ilika, 2005), intimate partner rape and violence (Esere et al, 2009), female genital mutilation (Ifemeje, 2012) and wife beating (Titilayo et al, 2014). These result in a variety of forms of trauma suffered by women, including psychological, reproductive, economic and other forms of abuse and deprivation. In regard to Nigerian HEIs, gender-based violence has not only been well documented by scholars, but it is still rife (Ladebo, 2003; Denga and Denga, 2004; Onokala, 2007; Anele, 2010; Iliyasu et al, 2011; Okoroafor et al, 2014; Okeke-Ihejirika et al, 2019). These forms of violence include physical, emotional, verbal abuse, as well as sexual harassment and victimisation of female students by male lecturers and students.

In addition to the afore-mentioned gender inequalities between staff, in HE enrolment and from gender-based violence, this study addresses other discriminatory practices that beset female students in Nigeria and are detrimental to their capabilities for wellbeing. Some of these are covered in the next section.

3.3 Students' Wellbeing Capabilities in Nigeria

According to the 2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index report, Nigeria had the lowest level of wellbeing and quality of life, and the greatest room for improvement out of the 30 countries assessed across the world (International Youth Foundation, 2017). As discussed in the last section, Nigeria ratified international agreements including CEDAW, the African Charter on the Rights of Women, and the MDGs (African Union, 2003; UNESCO, 2014; United Nations, 2015a). A new global sustainable development agenda, comprising a list of 17 SDGs (see Chapter 2 for definition), was also approved by United Nations member states in 2015, which includes Nigeria. The following SDGs are applicable to this study –

Goal 3 - Good health and wellbeing,

Goal 4 - Quality education,

Goal 5 - Gender equality,

Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities.

The realisation of these goals has an intersectional aspect, for example, the health and wellbeing of adolescent girls is curtailed because 'in many settings, [their] right to privacy and bodily autonomy is not respected' (United Nations Development Programme, 2015 para. 37), thereby promoting discrimination, violence, inequality and harmful practices against girls and women. Thus, the elimination of these practices can potentially improve inclusion and equity in quality education, as well as the promotion of opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

SDG 4.7 particularly covers issues of social justice and wellbeing in its aim to

> ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence (United Nations, 2015b para. 8).

It is therefore noteworthy that in relation to students' wellbeing, Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) states that:

> education fosters the worth and development of the individual; for each individual's sake and for the general development of the society… [it] has to be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship[s], individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship. (p. 7)

This philosophy ties into the national educational goals: for the individual's capability to imbibe good principles and manners; to gain competencies and grow mentally, physically, emotionally, socially and psychologically; and to recognise and act in recognition of the value of each human being (ibid, p. 8). The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) goes on to elucidate the government's intentions for education in all its forms, from early childhood/pre-primary to the financing of education. However, in Section 8A under tertiary education, it makes no mention of the benefits of university education for the individual student. I would therefore assume that HEIs translate the National Policy on Education as applicable to each context, discussed in Section 3.4.1 in relation to UniSEN's philosophy. Furthermore, I would argue that although Nigeria does not have a national policy on wellbeing, her development agenda for women through the SDGs sits within the contested space of a global policy architecture. This invariably stems from the legacy of the colonial rule and works to reproduce some of the neo-colonial global hierarchies that were addressed at the beginning of this chapter.

3.4 Research Context

Universities in Nigeria face numerous long-term challenges that are likely to impact students' wellbeing. These include insufficient funding and a lack of financial autonomy, the inability to maintain rapidly depreciating infrastructure, inadequate provision of basic amenities such as electricity, and water, failure to update ICT systems and other technical equipment, bureaucracy in administrative processes, violence and militancy by students, institutional corruption, the lack of accommodation and medical facilities, political tensions, decline in the quality of teaching and learning, industrial action by staff, and poor governance (Mahadi, 2007; Ogu, 2008; Oni and Alade, 2008; Alani et al, 2010; Bamiro, 2012; Salako, 2014; Desmennu and Owoaje, 2018). As a Federal university following national guidelines and standards, UniSEN is not exempt from the above-mentioned factors which pose a threat and barrier to students' wellbeing, whether directly or indirectly. In the UniSEN context, other issues can be added: industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Non-Academic Staff Union (see Chapter 6), uncertainties about fee increases, and the current political situation in Nigeria leading to regional unrest. The South-East region is regularly beset with challenges that stem

from the Nigeria-Biafra[14] civil war and still lead to uprisings by certain political groups in Igboland, such as the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)[15]. At the time of writing this thesis, IPOB was threatening political violence during ongoing State elections, which resulted in the closure of universities in South-East Nigeria for the safety of their students and staff (Shaban, 2017).

3.4.1 University of the South-East of Nigeria

The University of the South-East of Nigeria is used as the case study context of this research study (see Section 4.3 for the methodological characteristics and reasons for this decision). As alluded to in the last section, UniSEN is funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria and is therefore not regarded as an elite or private university. This also means that although located in Benoni State, UniSEN is required to admit a quota of students from other geographical regions. The multi-sited university runs four campuses that are spread over wide distances within the State; the main one is in Ajuba town, while the others are at Nwuka, Abangwu and Ivenso-Omashi. This study was conducted at the Ajuba campus because it hosts most of the degree programmes and levels of study[16], and therefore has the largest number of students. UniSEN's (2014) General and Academic Regulations booklet states that as of 2014, the university was comprised of 14 faculties, 70 departments, and 12 undergraduate degree options, offering a total of 99 academic programmes. According to the Nigerian University System Statistical Digest of 2017, the overall student population at UniSEN was 36,769 comprising of 17,932 males and 18,837 females. Thus, female students comprise a ratio of 51.23% (National Universities Commission, 2018).

Regarding the provision of student accommodation, the university was previously non-residential, but recent public-private partnerships were implemented that led to the

[14] Also known as the Nigerian Civil War or the Biafran War, the Nigeria-Biafra War was fought in SE Nigeria from 1967 to 1970 (Falola and Ezekwem, 2016).

[15] MASSOB and IPOB are two of the numerous separatist groups in SE Nigeria that are agitating for the independence of Biafra from Nigerian rule (Onuoha, 2013; Ibeanu et al, 2016).

[16] For undergraduate programmes, study years are referred to as levels, for example year 3 full-time is 300 Level and part-time is 600 Level.

construction and management of three hostels[17] within the campus, designated as male, female and Gozie Hall (mixed). The halls include study rooms, common rooms for recreation and tuck-shops that sell toiletries and small household items. Apart from these three, the remainder of the student hostels are located in off-campus in areas such as Ivenso, Government Quarters, Bonny and Obienu Site. Hostel fees vary according to proximity to the university, and the three on-campus hostels are cheaper because they are subsidised. They are also over-subscribed because of the amenities provided, such as constant electricity and water which are not necessarily available in other accommodation facilities. Therefore, only first year students are eligible to apply for accommodation in the male- and female-only hostels, whereas final year students can also apply for Gozie Hall. The Ajuba campus has a medical clinic, large main library, branches of several banks, eateries, as well as lecture rooms, departmental laboratories, and centres for entrepreneurship and Asian studies (alluded to in Section 3.1 and discussed in the findings chapters). There is an intra-campus transportation system comprising of minibuses and keke napeps[18] (see Section 4.4.2 and Photo 4.1).

UniSEN's philosophy is that 'knowledge should be propagated and disseminated to individuals without let or hindrance' (2014, p. 1). The university's mission is the orientation of students to 'use their education in the solution of practical problems confronting them and the Nigerian society' (ibid, p. 1). Linking the SDGs, National Policy on Education and UniSEN's philosophy/mission with Robinson's (2016) social justice definition (to challenge injustice and value diversity), it can be argued that at least in theory, the wellbeing of all students, including women, is achievable. Apart from the faculties, the non-academic departments that are directly responsible for student wellbeing include Student Affairs[19], Guidance and Counselling, and Medicals. The extent to which the above-mentioned policies are being implemented in practice, along with their results and implications for gender justice in this academic context, will be explored in this study.

[17] The students' halls of residence are known as 'hostels' and are situated both within and outside the university campus.

[18] Keke Napep is the term used to describe a three-wheeled vehicle used for public transport in Nigeria.

[19] The Student Affairs department comprises of three divisions: Main, Technology and Protocol; Accommodation; Graduation and National Youth Service.

Summary

This chapter covered the general research context of Nigeria, her colonial and patriarchal history and status in relation to international guidelines on gender equality and equity. I have addressed the conditions of women in universities, discussed some challenges that currently hinder the wellbeing capabilities of students, and detailed some of the social justice issues faced by female students in particular. Furthermore, the chapter reviewed some long-term systemic difficulties in Nigerian HEIs and focused on UniSEN as a case study institution. Having contextualised the study, the following chapter provides the philosophical background of the study, my positioning as researcher and the research design implemented to include the data collection strategies, analytical methods and ethical issues that were considered throughout the study.

-4- Methodology

Overview

This chapter presents the philosophical approaches, methodology and methods used to conduct the study, and is divided into three parts. In Part I, I introduce my research identity and positionality as both insider and outsider ('in-betweener') for the research context and as a human instrument; this is followed by my rationale for using relativism as ontology (my view of reality) and postcolonial feminism as an epistemological approach (my view of knowledge) for this study. I also address the use of critical participatory research as a methodological tool and process. Part II of the chapter details the research project development, including my choice of UniSEN as the research context, a brief description of the participants and their levels of involvement, and the methods and processes of data collection and analysis. In Part III, I highlight the ethical issues that were considered throughout the study, from the safety and wellbeing of the participants, data management and security, research trustworthiness, to the process of continuous researcher reflexivity.

PART I Philosophical Approaches

4.1 Positioned as an 'In-betweener'

According to Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013), positionality refers to the researcher's assumed role within a research study. From the onset of this critical participatory study, I chose to explicitly express my own personal and professional voice. As discussed in Chapter 1, part of my rationale for studying the topics of wellbeing, capabilities and gender justice came from numerous years of professional experience in women development and training. On a personal level, both the substantive topic and target participant group are relevant to me as a female researcher since I have myself been through the Nigerian education system, often working on similar projects with women within the country, and I have a deep interest in the current issues involved. However, as a mature PhD student living and studying in the United Kingdom, I was unable to completely reflect the position of the research participants. Given this paradox, I

presented myself as both insider and outsider to the research context (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Holmes, 2014; Dixon, 2015; McNess et al, 2015) or as an 'in-betweener researcher, [who was] neither entirely inside or outside…' (Milligan, 2014 p. 1). Although the distinctions of insider and outsider exist as subjective versus objective approaches respectively (Lee and Gregory, 2008; McNess et al, 2015), a combination of the two was deployed in order to produce 'a holistic... portrait' (Creswell 2013, p. 96) incorporating both participants and my views. The in-betweener positioning also came into play at different points in the research process where I felt conflicted in identifying as an *activist* for gender justice or as an *advocate* for female students' wellbeing. Mama (2011) explains that activist research is couched within 'a politics of solidarity' (p. 14) which calls for an activist researcher to resist institutional norms to remain detached from participants; rather, endeavour to maintain a closer relationship with them. For example, during fieldwork there were times where I could have challenged unfair statements and generalisations made against women folk by a male non-academic staff leader, but I refrained as it would be construed as unprofessional, rude and detrimental to the welfare of my participants. Nevertheless, this constant interplay was particularly difficult for me, as I struggled to maintain the position of an impartial researcher who was neither aligned to the participants nor to the institution. As I go on to discuss in subsequent chapters, some of these situations or encounters constitute Mama's assertion that while researching in familiar contexts, 'we are situated with epistemic advantages, as well as challenges and demands' (Ibid).

Moreover, I placed myself as a human instrument or a *researcher-as-instrument*, a research identity that uses my background, values, skills and experiential knowledge, and sometimes even biases, as a source for data collection and analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Brodsky, 2008; Simon, 2011). It is from this standpoint that I engaged with and explored the realities and experiences of the research participants, themselves also human subjects (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Using myself as an instrument involved being sincere about the strengths and shortcomings of my research and can be characterised as self-critical reflection (White and Pettit, 2004) or 'self-reflexivity[20]'

[20] Tracy (2010) defines self-reflexivity as the researcher being honest and authentic with self, the study and the research audience.

and 'transparency' (Tracy, 2010 p. 841). As previously argued, my reflections on the design, methods, judgements, practices and motivations, were evident throughout the research process and the writing of the thesis (Nwako, 2015). A further description of the concept and my practice of reflexivity can be found later in this chapter in Section 4.7.1.

In conducting this study therefore, I drew together my own reflexive account of the effects of institutional and social structures on the wellbeing of the female undergraduates as well as theirs, including the extent of their personal agency over said structures. Furthermore, in trying to weave my experiences into the study and to understand the participants' perspectives, my voice may become more dominant than their voices in some parts of the thesis. There is the potential danger that, even with a postcolonial approach and intimate understanding of the shared Nigerian context, I could allow my own assumptions and interpretations to limit my research partners' experiences or understandings of their experiences of wellbeing. To address this in the chapters to follow, I constantly try to make meaning of the findings not only by relating the data back to the literature and theoretical frameworks, but also by expressing my own opinions, understandings, interpretations, representations and recommendations as a human instrument, as the main researcher in the study and the author of the thesis. As Hall (1997) succinctly asserts 'representation is the production of meaning through language' (p. 28).

My own participation in the study also consolidated the idea of the personal as the political (see Chapter 1) in adopting the stance of 'reflective partner or conscientizer' (Blaikie, 2007 p. 52), not only in my identification with the critical gender issues faced by the research subjects but further in my commitment to seeking change, emancipation and wellbeing development. This is the aspect from which our voices (the participants' and mine) are heard, denoting the relevance of this critical participatory study – discussed further in Section 4.2.3.

4.2 Research Paradigms

Diagram 4.1 shows the philosophical approaches that underpin this study.

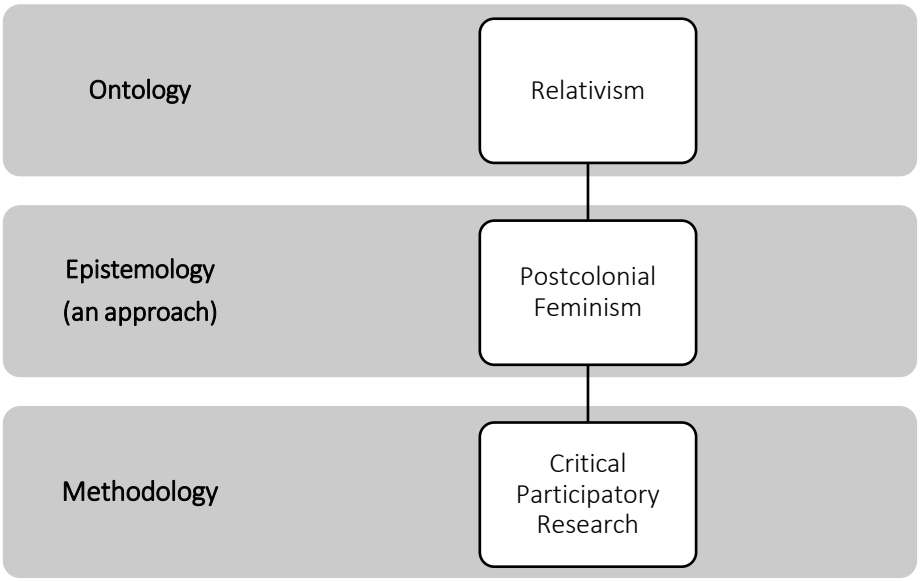


Diagram 4.1: My philosophical approaches

In seeking to explore SWB perceptions, this study drew upon qualitative research methodologies that focus on 'the way in which people being studied understand and interpret their social reality' (Bryman, 1988 p. 8). Qualitative research involves the generation of data from subjective experiences and behavioural patterns more directly than quantitative studies, which use variables, generate numbers, counts, statistics and measurements (Carspecken, 1996; Hammersley, 2015). For this study, in-depth data were collected from female undergraduate students within their natural settings – the university campus and surroundings.

4.2.1 Relativism as Ontology

As my lived experiences contribute to my worldview, so do the research participants' experiences of the world in which they live and shape their own reality. I therefore used an understanding of the subjective nature of the participants' worldview to study their lived experiences and elicit opinions of their own wellbeing. The nature of the subjective worldview,

> assumes that our perceptions are what shape reality, and ... sees facts as culturally and historically located, and therefore subject to the variable behaviours, attitudes, experiences, and interpretations... of both the observer and the observed (O'Gorman and Macintosh, 2015 p. 58).

This worldview is also depicted from an 'ontology of relativism', where the view of reality is based on each individual's construction of it, their development of knowledge, their understanding of how and why things happen in their lives, and the meanings derived from their experiences (Raddon, 2010). Therefore, there is no single meaning of SWB and instead it is perceived and constructed by individuals, as indicated through RQ1 for this study. I therefore sought to develop my own ontological understanding of their wellbeing through personal dialogue and respectful interaction with each of the participants (see also Part III Ethical Considerations where I discuss relational ethics).

4.2.2 The Postcolonial Feminist Lens

According to Maynard (1994), 'the feminist concern with epistemology has centred on the questions 'who knows what, about whom and how is this knowledge legitimized?'.' I draw from postcolonial feminism as an epistemological lens through which to understand female students' meaning making and knowing of the issues that they face in the Nigerian HE culture. Thus, knowledge constructed through this lens is formed from their postcolonial contextual experiences. Having already provided working definitions of both postcolonialism and postcolonial feminism in Chapter 1, I will now expound upon the latter, which stems from the philosophical approach of critical theory (Bohman, 2016). A critical theory refers to 'social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms' (para. 1) and is particularly relevant for oppressed groups. Furthermore, a feminist perspective addresses the role of gender in the construction of knowledge, critiques the ways in which women are dominated in power relations and seeks to change individual, social, political, institutional and societal perceptions and practices for the benefit of disadvantaged groups such as women (Anderson, 2019). Feminist philosophers posit that:

> dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by excluding them from inquiry, denying them epistemic authority, …producing theories of women that represent them as inferior, deviant, or significant only in the ways they serve male interests, producing theories of social phenomena that render women's activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible, and producing knowledge… that reinforces gender and other social hierarchies. (para. 1)

Feminist theories include liberal, third world, radical, black, standpoint theory, African, Marxist-socialist and postcolonial feminisms. The third world, black, postcolonial and African feminist theories portray the others (liberal, radical, standpoint theory and Marxist-Socialist) as Western feminisms and decry the fact that those Western-based approaches are unable to interpret contextual realities except from their own superior concepts of knowledge (Mushibwe, 2009). These four theories (third world, black, postcolonial and African) therefore emerged as a response to and in defence of their own social and cultural epistemological experiences, as contextual knowers of the issues that cause them to be disadvantaged and marginalised. In particular, postcolonial feminism does not only contest Western ideas of the values and significance of other peoples' cultural practices, but it also highlights the lingering effects of colonial rule upon women in postcolonial contexts (Raymond, 2015; Schmidt et al, 2018; Okeke-Ihejirika et al, 2019). Thus, using a postcolonial feminist lens to study the wellbeing capabilities of female undergraduate students in Nigeria helped me to understand their own lived experiences of the enduring gender inequalities, their agency and their potential to make a difference for themselves (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). The lens also enabled me to critique the persistent oppressive legacies of colonisation upon women and students within the wider Nigerian HE, cultural and societal context.

4.2.3 Critical Participatory Research

Participatory research or inquiry was developed as a means of 'doing research largely for people who have been considered voiceless, or powerless…' (Nind, 2011 para. 2). The term participation implies that research that is conducted with the research subjects, rather than *on* or *about* them. The use of participatory research was essential to my study as it enabled the participants to take some form of ownership over the issues discussed. Their participation gave them a voice with which to express their SWB needs and challenges. Walker (2019) similarly posits that social participation is an epistemic capability that is critically beneficial to students' personal development, democratic interaction, solidarity for action, educational achievement, and their intellectual capacity through critical thinking and public reasoning. Social participation helps them to 'develop as epistemic agents and advance epistemic justice' (p. 222).

According to Mertens (2007), fostering an interactive link is vital to the researcher's understanding of the participants' personal experiences of wellbeing in the context, and this is the focus for the RQs. Moreover, participatory inquiry provides me as the main researcher with opportunities to be able to co-construct knowledge through this study. Heron and Reason (1997), seminal scholars in the field of co-operative inquiry, suggest that the outcomes of a participatory study provide an understanding of the researchers' own practical and experiential knowledge (researchers as subjects), together with an acknowledgement of the research subjects' human right to be involved in designing research that produces information about them (subjects as researchers). Although participatory research is not always emancipatory, it encourages a co-operative and interdependent relationship between co-subjects and co-researchers.

Involvement in my study engaged and enabled the participants to identify, assess and address the challenges that thwart the development of their capabilities for wellbeing. Hence participation aligns with the capability approach (Duraiappah et al, 2005). According to Clark (2016), 'no research is inherently participatory: it is largely through its application that research becomes participatory' (p. 2). Relating this to my study, parts of the research design were mutually agreed between myself and some of the participants (for example the timings of fieldwork), as they were not all involved at all levels of the study (see Section 4.3.1 for a detailed discussion of the spectrum of participation).

Similar to postcolonial feminism, participatory inquiry draws some of its characteristics from the traditions of critical and social justice research (Swartz and Nyamnjoh, 2018). Hence, critical participatory research not only critiques individual inequalities within cultural, political and historical contexts, but it also seeks change through collective action (Creswell, 2009; Dentith et al, 2012). This approach to research also enables a self-critique of my practice and process. It reflects my background and positioning: my values are embedded in participatory inquiry, and so a strong emphasis on self-reflexivity and a deep engagement in critical reflection are part of my own practice (Heron and Reason, 1997; White and Pettit, 2004), as detailed in Section 4.7.1 as well as in Chapter 9. Furthermore, the value orientation of a researcher is fundamental to 'the axiological question about what is intrinsically worthwhile, what it is about the human condition that is valuable as an end in itself' (Heron and Reason, 1997 p. 10). Critical participatory research therefore supported my values by providing a

balance in hierarchy between myself and the participants, as well as opportunities for supportive teamwork and creative independence. In other words, this perspective helped to temper oppressive biases and to encourage democratic decision-making – values which are presumed to enhance the participants' capabilities and wellbeing (Nussbaum, 2000; White and Pettit, 2004). Finally, the critical participatory methodology supported the practical methods of data collection and analysis (see Sections 4.4 and 4.5 respectively).

PART II Research Design

4.3 UniSEN as a Case Study

As discussed in Section 3.4.1 on the research context, I decided to use a Nigerian university as a case study from which to draw my findings. The case study approach strengthened my qualitative research design by emphasising the distinctive incidents, important events and the complexity of activities and methods that would enable a holistic investigation of a group of individuals within the research context (Stake, 1995; Mason, 2018). In choosing the case to be studied, I considered the following basic characteristics suggested by (Harrison et al, 2017) of case study research:

(a) that individuals or groups within an organisation are studied in their real setting,
(b) the significance of 'contextual variables [including] political, economic, social, cultural, historical, and/or organizational factors' (p. 9) in understanding the case being studied,
(c) that data are collected through multiple sources, triangulated and analysed systematically and rigorously.

These characteristics are discussed further in the following sections of this chapter.

According to Hammersley et al (2000), one critique of the case study approach is that its research findings cannot be generalised to other people and contexts, a concern which I address below in Section 4.7 on research trustworthiness. Moreover, UniSEN was selected as a case study institution for two reasons: first, because the institution is situated in my home state in Nigeria, and second, because it is of particular interest to me, as a close relative

previously worked there in a leadership capacity. This relationship benefitted my study as institutional access was granted 'purely from personal contacts' (Silverman, 2013 p. 13). Though this connection could have led to some researcher bias, it served to produce an increased objectivity that my potential bias could balance the respondents' views in critiquing the institution.

Although Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) recommend that a demographical description of the research context is useful, I have only included brief, general information for reasons of anonymity and have used pseudonyms (such as 'UniSEN') to protect the identity of the institution as well as the participants (see Footnote 1 in the opening chapter).

The study was conducted between March 2016 (initial contact) and March 2018 (completion of data analysis); the university granted permission to carry out the research (see letter in Appendix I). In addition, I applied to be put in contact with a 'gatekeeper' at the university with whom I would be able to liaise regarding the study. The gatekeeper is defined by Creswell (2013) as someone who has the status of an insider within a research context and performs the role of facilitating contact between the researcher and other participants. For this study, I sought a gatekeeper who was familiar with the target group and therefore able to provide intermediate support with any participants who may be considered 'potentially vulnerable within the research process' (Heath et al, 2007 p. 406). Given the gender focus of the study, it was important for the gatekeeper to be female and preferably a senior academic who would be able to grant me access to other staff as well as students. Following an online search for someone with the above-mentioned characteristics, I shortlisted three potential gatekeepers. I subsequently sent an email to the first woman, introducing myself and my proposed research project. She responded a few days later, informing me that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) had also notified her of my application and she expressed her consent to act as my gatekeeper on behalf of the university.

Below is an excerpt[21] from my fieldwork journal after my first meeting with the gatekeeper:

> I observed the playful, friendly, approachable, warm, mother-figure relationship that my gatekeeper had with her staff and students. I heard some of them call her 'Mummy'. To me, they addressed her as 'Dr. C' (her first initial). But there was also great respect there!
>
> Another thing that surprised me was her willingness to give up her office for the 1½ or so hours that I met a group of potential participants for the first time… Afterwards, I found her in one of the secretaries' offices working on her laptop and photocopying some papers. I thought to myself, 'this woman is not only an intelligent, experienced academic, but also humble. Little wonder that she is a mentor to many – staff and students alike'. I had indeed made a great choice!!!
>
> (Reflections, 2016)

Initial meetings were held with the gatekeeper to inform her about the research plan and to discuss the strategy for participant selection. During the research period, we also maintained regular online contact via emails, WhatsApp[22] and private Linkedin[23] messages.

4.3.1 Selection of Participants

Although qualitative studies typically involve gathering large amounts of data (Emond, 2005; Sangasubana, 2011), I decided to maintain a feasible sample size of 15 female participants as primary sources. Other secondary sources were a male student, UniSEN staff, documents-as-data such as institutional policies, and visual data including photographs, signs and maps. These multiple data sources were employed for triangulation purposes (see discussion in Section 4.4). Two sampling methods were used: initially, purposive sampling through working closely with the gatekeeper to identify potential participants. After individuals had been identified, I utilised snowball sampling and requested that one participant help to recruit other participants.

[21] See Section 4.3.2 and the Overview of Chapter 7 for explanations of the texts presented with a coloured background throughout the thesis.

[22] WhatsApp is an online messaging service through which people exchange text and audio messages, make telephone calls, send photographs and videos (Metz, 2016).

[23] Linkedin is an internet-based professional worldwide network of members comprising employees, business people, students and graduates (Linkedin, 2017).

According to Palys (2008), purposive sampling involves making strategic decisions about who, where and how a study will be carried out according to its research objectives. This type of sampling was appropriate for my study because it enabled me to select participants from different academic programmes, levels of study and living arrangements, which helped me to define and focus clearly on the data I needed to answer the RQs. On my second visit to the field, the gatekeeper kindly permitted me to attend and observe a teaching practice orientation workshop for 300 Level[24] students organised by her department, which gave me the opportunity to discuss the project with the students and recruit participants. The final visit to the field was to explore the emerging data more deeply, and to confirm the initial themes and findings I had obtained on previous visits. I therefore decided to use snowball sampling through my co-researcher (details below) to select the remaining participants. Snowball sampling occurs when 'the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others' (Bryman, 2012 p. 202).

Following these selection processes, I held several group and one-to-one meetings with the potential participants to introduce and explain the study, as well as to seek their consent to take part in it (Diagram 4.2 provides the statistics around selection). At each meeting, the participant information sheets (see Appendix II) were distributed and discussed; the research process, methods and timeline were clarified and questions were answered.

[24] As previously explained in section 3.4.1, a level of study denotes the full- and part-time undergraduate year, for example year 3 full-time is 300 Level and part-time is 600 Level.

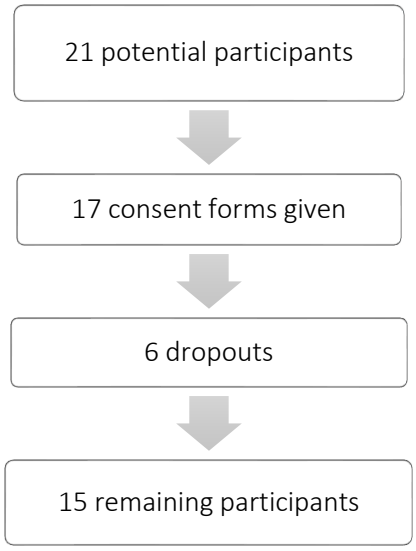


Diagram 4.2: Participant selection figures

In total, I interacted with twenty-one female students. Four of them were not interested or were unable to participate in the study. Out of the remaining seventeen who were given consent forms, twelve agreed immediately while five were unsure and required some time to decide. Although the five finally consented, there was a further attrition rate of two during the research period, which resulted in fifteen final participants.

4.3.2 Overview of Participants

This section first introduces the fifteen participants who were primary data sources, and subsequently the secondary data sources. In a bid to protect their identities in representation, their information is anonymised with pseudonyms. Excerpts from my observations, fieldnotes and reflective journals are also included and often found in portions of text with a coloured background (see example below). I present my reflections and fieldnotes (with relevant dates) in coloured background texts to make a distinction between my voice and the participants' voices.

Starting from my pilot fieldwork visit, I recorded accounts of the initial meetings with some of my research partners, my insights into their personalities, and the development of the research process. For example:

> As arranged, Dr. C (my gatekeeper) had invited some potential participants to attend an initial briefing about the research study. When I arrived, 2 students were waiting and another 2 joined us later, namely Prisca, MissQ, Chimdi and Stella. Dr. C kindly left her office at our disposal to give us some privacy.
>
> First, I introduced myself and the purpose of my visit to the university. In a bid to put them at ease, I explained my background, interest in the research topic, and why I chose this university in particular [disclosure of personal relationship and interest].
>
> As I explained the project, reason and my intended role as observer-participant, I noticed that MissQ was quite clued up, as she kept nodding then replied, 'Yes they have taught us something about that in first semester. It's like observing participants, that is knowing more about a people's culture and interviewing them'.
>
> After the general discussion, I asked if they would be interested in participating in the study. Prisca, Chimdi and Stella agreed but MissQ appeared to hesitate, asking what exactly further participation will entail. I explained more about the process, timing and their potential involvement, after which she seemed happier, smiled more and even gave me a hug at the end of the session.
>
> We exchanged telephone numbers and email addresses, and I asked if they are on WhatsApp to which they all confirmed. I thanked them and promised to keep in touch, then they left.
>
> (Fieldnotes, August 2016)

Table 4.1 provides basic biographic information on the participants (primary data sources) in alphabetical order of pseudonyms. Some data is missing because it was not obtained from those participants. A brief profile of each participant is included at the beginning of Chapter 5 in the section on Whose Voices?. In addition, I interacted with and collected data from other sources at UniSEN (also protected with pseudonyms) in Table 4.2.

Participant	Level of Study	Course	Accommodation[25]
Akudo	300	Integrated Science	-
Celine	300	Mass Communication	Ivenso
Chimdi	400	Science Education	Lives in Ajuba Town
Dumebi	600 CEP (Continuing Education Programme, part-time)	Computer Science	Government Quarters
Gloria	-	-	Gozie Hall
Ifunanya	200	-	Ivenso
Ije	100	Statistics	Ivenso
Kelechi	300	Law	Gozie Hall
Marian	300	Mathematics Education	Lives in Ajuba Town
MissQ	300/400	Psychology	Ivenso
Nina	300	Law	Gozie Hall
Nneoma	200	-	Ivenso
Patricia	300	Science Education	-
Prisca	300/400	Psychology	Lives at Home
Somadina	100	Parasitology and Entomology	Ivenso

Table 4.1: List of Participants

Edwin	A young neighbour and family friend from Mbata studying Mathematics Education in 300 Level, who I approached and interviewed to obtain insights and information from a male student's perspective.
Prof. David Adaji	Lecturer in the Faculty of Biological Sciences, however he was interviewed by MissQ in his non-academic capacity as Chairman of the UniSEN branch of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and former President of the university's Student Union Government.
Mrs. Chinyere Enuma	Senior Librarian at UniSEN's main library. Marian conducted her interview.
Dr. Regina Okorie	Female Lecturer in the Management Department, Faculty of Business Administration. Her interview was also conducted by Marian.
Student Affairs Officer	This individual asked for complete anonymity, including their gender, in the reporting of this research, therefore a generic job title is used. Works at the Student Affairs Department which is responsible for the welfare of all students at UniSEN.
Mr. Linus Omana	Security staff at the main library.
Prof. Iloawuchi Ogbolu	Lecturer in the Faculty of Education.
Documents-as-data	• UniSEN's General and Academic Regulations (2014) • University Information Handbook (2016) • Vice Chancellor's three-year achievements (2017) • University Bulletins (March to July 2016)

Table 4.2: Secondary Sources

[25] Apart from Gozie Hall which is an on-campus mixed-sex hostel, all other accommodation is situated off-campus.

Co-researcher Collaboration

My intention to gain extensive collaboration with all the participants was not fully met because they were not all able to fully participate in all the data collection methods due to time constraints, examinations and other study commitments. Further, engagement with some of them was limited by timing as one of my fieldwork visits unintentionally occurred during enforced university 'holidays' caused by a problematic, albeit unforeseen, period of disruption to planned term dates by staff industrial action. Due to their different levels of participation and involvement in the study, I adapted the 'Spectrum of Public Participation' (Creative Commons, 2012 p. 25) from the International Association for Public Participation (IAPP; see Diagram 4.3). The IAPP is an international association whose mission is to expand public participation practices through its partner organisations. I selected the IAPP spectrum from a list of more than 36 models of participation listed by Creative Commons (2012) as it best describes the participation levels in my study.

Diagram 4.3: Adapted IAPP spectrum of participation

In applying this IAPP model to my study, the first level was providing the potential participants with information that would help them to understand the research problem. For the second level, some participants were consulted for feedback on their wellbeing experiences and capabilities at the university. Level three entailed direct involvement with all fifteen participants in exploring their wellbeing concerns and the impacting factors. The next level involved collaborating with the participants in areas such as conducting day-to-day decision making, in developing ideas about the data collection (for example, suggesting which staff to interview), and identifying solutions to fieldwork challenges. Level five was an attempt at self-empowerment through discussions about the participants' own agentic choices, as well as sharing ideas for making their voices heard within and beyond their environment. This final

level also included recommendations on the ways in which their wellbeing and capabilities can be supported – by themselves and others. All the stages were relevant for my study but were not necessarily used for each participant.

As co-constructors of knowledge, I referred to the primary participants as my *research partners*. Although they were involved in the study on different levels of participation, I worked more closely with one of them (MissQ) thereby identifying her as *co-researcher* in the study (see *Reflections, April 2017* below). From our initial meeting in August 2016 until the end of fieldwork in December 2017, we maintained contact on WhatsApp at least every other day. She also expressed a deep interest in the research process, from her involvement in the data collection methods and fieldwork analysis, to her helping with the snowball sampling, and finally to writing her own and others' experiences. As a result, MissQ's voice is extensively represented in the findings chapters of this thesis. I also considered the ethical implications of her involvement in data collection and analysis, for example, regarding issues of anonymity and confidentiality with her access to other people's data, or protecting her own identity as she suggested that she attends the interviews with two staff members (these issues are discussed further in Section 4.6 and in Chapter 9). Following these considerations, I decided that, from her insider positionality, MissQ's high level of input and close involvement in the study was necessarily beneficial to my own understanding of some of the complexities of the female students' experiences in a postcolonial HE research context. To maintain the criticality of the participatory process, I remained aware of these ethical issues and therefore ensured that my own research decisions and practices were sound. Thus, when we agreed our method of analysing some data separately and then comparing and discussing our ideas together (see Section 4.5.1), I made sure that all the transcripts that were sent to her had been completely anonymised.

So, we interviewed the ASUU President this afternoon. I was elated that MissQ was comfortable enough to introduce herself as my co-researcher. Having assumed that role, I was even more encouraged when she asked some additional questions from her notes that were not on the original schedule.

Because of the way she took on and adapted to the role so well, perhaps I could ask her if she's willing to also participate in analysing more data – especially if she is available on my final visit.

… My relationship with MissQ remains strong ☺ and I appreciate that she can approach me without formality, speak pidgin[26] English, and how we have formed an easy, teasing camaraderie.

(Reflections, April 2017)

4.4 Fieldwork

First visit	August 2016
•Pilot study •Commenced online communication •Collected and commenced analysis of documents (texts, visuals, reports)	
Second visit	April 2017
•Campus walks •Participatory mapping group •Interviews with staff	
Third visit	October 2017
•Campus walks •Participatory group using vignettes •Interviews with other secondary sources	

Diagram 4.4: Overview of fieldwork

[26] Pidgin is defined as 'a language that is formed from a mixture of several languages when speakers of different languages need to talk to each other' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2018 para. 3).

Three fieldwork visits were made to UniSEN, and continuous online contact from the start to the end of the data collection period was maintained through the WhatsApp messaging service. Hence some of this online communication was used as part of the data collection, with the consent of the research participants involved. The first UniSEN visit was a week-long pilot study with a purposive sample of four final year[27] female students, two of whom had graduated from the university by the time the actual data collection started on the second visit. This initial study was carried out to test the methods which are detailed in the sections to follow. Prescott and Soeken (1989) define pilot studies as 'small-scale versions of the planned study, trial runs of planned methods..., or miniature version of the anticipated research' (p. 60), which lead to a revision of initial research plans. The results of the pilot testing were used to determine if changes were needed in the data collection methods, for example asking a variation of the questions to different research partners. Some of the pilot data were used as part of the overall findings, since I felt that the voices and experiences of those students also matter and should not be discounted in the whole research picture.

Qualitative research encompasses a wide range of traditional data collection methods including participant observations, field notes, researcher journals, interviews, focus group discussions, document and visual methods (Schwartz, 1989; Denscombe, 1995; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Burke and Miller, 2001; Cohen et al, 2007; Edwards and Holland, 2013). Other more recent methods are vignettes, participatory mapping, mobile interviews, and virtual or digital methods such as blogs, social media discussion forums, WhatsApp and Skype (Bolger et al, 2003; Yardley, 2008; Evans and Jones, 2011; Weller, 2015; Clarke et al, 2017). In this study, I used both traditional and more recent methods of data collection. The four methods used were participant observations and researchers' fieldnotes, campus walks, participatory mapping and vignettes groups and qualitative interviews (see Table 4.2). This multi-method approach gives a fuller picture of the research context and lived experiences of the participants; it helps to 'enhance the credibility of a research study' (Hastings, 2010 p. 2), particularly if the data are further analysed through multiple approaches. This is also known

[27] The choice of final year students for the pilot study is because having attended the university for at least four years, they would have had more experiences than students in the lower levels of study.

as triangulation. According to Morse (2003), in a 'multimethod design' (p. 190), two or more research methods are rigorously conducted and then triangulated to be more complete.

Research Questions	Data Sources	Methods of Collection
RQ1 - How do the female undergraduate students experience wellbeing? RQ2 - What are the wider contextual influences on the wellbeing of the research participants?	*Primary* • Co-researcher and Research Partners *Secondary* • One male student • University Staff • Documents-as-data – University policies, bulletins, photographs, signs, maps	Participant Observations and Fieldnotes Campus Walks Participatory Group Sessions Qualitative Interviews

Table 4.3: Data collection strategy

Given the bottom-up approach of participatory research and the participants' varied levels of participation, the methods chosen were used flexibly within the theoretical frameworks of SWB and the CA (discussed in Chapter 2). Drake and Heath (2011) advise a differentiation between pre-formed ideas within a theoretical framework that are present at the start of the research and the emergence of aspects which are not already known, such as the problems that are being experienced within the context. I was therefore able to assume an open-ended, emergent and progressive stance towards the construction of wellbeing knowledge as the UniSEN fieldwork progressed.

Each method is explained in detail below.

4.4.1 Participant Observations and Fieldnotes

My time spent in the field involved an immersion in the day-to-day lives of the participants in their natural context or culture, to be able to experience university life as they do. This included on- and off-campus visits to their departments, the main library and Education

Department library, eateries[28], hostel accommodation, markets, and hair salons; I also attended some lecture and teaching events. The interactions between my research partners and other stakeholders at UniSEN were also observed.

My co-researcher (MissQ) and I each assumed the dual roles of participant observers: as participants experiencing the context from the inside, and as observers studying it from the outside (Rock, 2001). Rather than conduct structured observations like those often used in positivistic research, we opted for unstructured observations to identify any hidden cultural undertones and institutional influences that occurred within the context, for example the behaviours expected of the different genders. We observed verbal and physical behaviour (Mulhall, 2002), interactions, places and people, and the participants' reactions to all of these situations.

Theoretical Influences on Observations

Given the postcolonial Nigerian context, I was particularly interested in observing power relations between not only staff and students but also between male and female students, and between female students in group settings. I also sought to make meaning of the social and material aspects of the campus available in the provision of services, buildings and campus facilities. As 'insiders' to the context, the use of observations enabled my co-researcher and I to 'see' critically beyond the obvious in certain situations; our positionality helped us to 'spot the significant events which [have an influence on wellbeing and] may evolve naturally and slowly out of what seem like trivial activities and interactions' (McNeill and Chapman 2005 p. 75). We therefore used our observations as a tool with which to defamiliarise and distance ourselves from the norm by seeing and interpreting mundane activities in daily life and practices. Mannay (2010) refers to this practice as 'making the familiar strange' (p. 91).

From my 'outsider' positioning (see Section 4.1), my participant observation roles were rather fluid, ranging from complete participant, participant as observer, nonparticipant/observer as participant, or complete observer (Creswell, 2013), depending on the object and method. For example, I was a *complete participant* on a market trip haggling prices with MissQ my co-researcher, a *participant as observer* during interviews with university staff, an *observer as*

[28] Canteens, restaurants and fast food venues are referred to as 'eateries'.

participant on a campus walk which enabled me to note interactions between students, and a *complete observer* when attending lectures. At other times, it was more beneficial for me to act as a complete or passive observer, to focus on recording thick descriptions of situations non-obtrusively, to 'reduce the effects of researcher presence as much as possible' (Carspecken, 1996 p. 51).

Moreover, I decided whether to conduct overt or covert observation. For the participants and interviewees who were aware that the study was being conducted and had given formal written consent to take part, overt observations were carried out, as the research goals and motives had been made clear and open to them beforehand (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). In some situations, a covert approach was more appropriate in order to conceal my research motives and identity, for example when observing interactions between students and staff members at a teaching practice orientation session.

Finally, observations were used to provide insights for RQ2 in discovering how existing gender stereotypes, socio-cultural norms and institutional structures affect the SWB of the participants. They were valuable in giving information 'about the influence of the physical environment' (Mulhall, 2000 p. 308) on the students' wellbeing, as I discuss further in the section on campus walking interviews.

Fieldnotes

During the study, my co-researcher and I recorded our fieldnotes in a total of four A5 sized notebooks. Fieldnotes were descriptive accounts of our day-to-day observations and experiences, particularly as I was immersed in the context and participated in the activities therein (Emerson et al, 1995). Some of these observations were taken while exchanging WhatsApp messages and calls with my research partners, and I therefore tried to write some notes every day. In addition to observations within the field, the notes covered my daily reflections (Atkinson, 1992), for example my thoughts about the media through which students receive important information, and another research partner's feedback on a staff interview that we had conducted. Apart from the notebooks, we constructed fieldwork accounts using equipment such as A1-sized sheets for mapping and drawing, phone cameras and an audio

recorder, from which the data were subsequently transcribed into fieldnotes. From these fieldnotes, the raw data were further textualised and transcribed (Emerson et al, 2001).

My intention was to keep the fieldnotes as simple as possible for my research partners so the notes would not be time-consuming; this was achieved by giving my research partners the freedom to write them in their own way as soon as possible after the situation. Emerson et al (2001) categorised diverse fieldnotes writing styles as 'writer's prose', recalling and ordering, action and dialogue, personal feelings and emotions and analytic writing (pp. 357-362). I also explored the different practical ways that researchers construct their written fieldnotes, as well as various formats suggested by scholars with which to record fieldnotes (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Walford, 2009; Delamont, 2012). Some qualitative researchers separate fieldnotes – often referred to as on-the-field, primary records or context notes – from field diaries or journals (or out-of-the-field notes – Walford, 2009), in which details are recorded from memory of actual observations. In other studies, both are written into one record in the field, as recommended by Emerson et al (1995) and Creswell (2013). For my own fieldnotes, I used a combination of Creswell's (2013) version of 'observational protocol' (p. 169), in which the researcher records descriptive notes, sketches and reflective notes, along with my own approach to free writing (see Appendix III for an example). At the end of fieldwork, a final meeting was held with some of research partners during which our notes were collated and discussed, with some initial analysis. Again, it is noteworthy here that as I present the findings in this thesis, my fieldnotes and reflections will be highlighted with a coloured background.

4.4.2 Campus Walks

Walking interviews or mobile methods are used in newer studies where, as Evans and Jones (2011) state succinctly, the 'researchers walk with participants' (p. 849). Campus walks and tours with my research partners were conducted as an innovative method within the context to glean in-depth information and make observations of their actions and reactions to places, people and occurrences in the context of study. In their introduction to walking as a research method, Ingold and Vergunst (2008) posit that it promotes:

> social relations… [and supports learning] about the human body and its movements; about perception and the work of the senses; about education,

> enskillment and the formation of knowledge; about the constitution of space and place; about wayfaring and storytelling; and about the relations between humans and non-humans. (p. 1)

Therefore, to gain a fuller picture of their lived experiences in relation to the research questions, these walks included places that were not on the campus premises such as off-campus hostels, hair salons and markets. Given the substantive topic of study, I was aware that certain places may expose my research partners to further risk or harm their wellbeing and therefore maintained a caveat to only visit the areas where they felt safe and comfortable (Nwako, 2020 forthcoming). Apart from the walks, we also communicated while using other modes of transport, for example motorbikes, keke napeps (see Photo 4.1) and minibuses. One benefit of this method is its accessibility to the participants' experiential knowledge of and attitudinal reactions to the environment (ibid, p. 850; 851). Particularly for qualitative research, this method involves detailed interactions with the participants and highlights the importance of place, space and practices of the context through trails and tours (Fetterman, 1998; Kusenbach, 2012).

The walks were conducted with MissQ, Marian and Ije because they were able to grant me the time needed for such a lengthy activity – sometimes over a whole day. During the walks, casual conversations were held at certain places of interest for them and we discussed the sights and sounds being witnessed, for example, while sitting on a bench outside the Art department, queuing to be served food in an off-campus eatery, or simply riding side by side in a keke napep on our way to the market.

During the walks, we recorded some signs, maps, posters and artefacts which my research partners reported had affected their wellbeing. Since visual data symbolises the 'seen and observable' (Emmison, 2011 p. 236), we used the images collected not only to provoke discussion and elicit meanings from the participants, but also to develop an understanding of how they conceptualise their wellbeing. Photographs were also taken with permission from the subject as necessary and were discussed either on the spot or in one of our follow-up interviews (see section 4.4.4 on *Qualitative Interviews*). Vigurs and Kara (2016) point out that the 'act of participants photographing their *view* of... life, together with the photographs produced... act as triggers for narratives of place' (pp. 2-3).

Photo 4.1: A Keke Napep

4.4.3 Group Participatory Sessions

Two separate participatory sessions took place with four participants in each group. Similar to the campus walks described above, the participatory session is an innovative method in the research context. According to O'Neill et al (2018), the use of participatory mapping and mobile or walking methods imply that the researcher shows a commitment to inclusive practice and values the hearing and sharing all the participants' voices and stories. These methods also emphasise the importance of creative research especially for the purpose of social transformation (p. 8). The importance of confidentiality was discussed at the start of both group sessions and the research partners were asked to respect each other's personal information. In this study, the first session was carried out with a mapping technique; vignettes were used in the second session, which was conducted on a subsequent visit.

Participatory Mapping Group

Participatory mapping is an interactive, visual activity that uses 'accessible and free-ranging… methods in an individual or group interview setting to interrogate qualitative research

questions' (Emmel, 2008). In the first session of this study, the participants drew a map of the campus premises together (see Photo 4.2).

Photo 4.2: Participatory mapping session

Subsequently, they used coloured sticky labels to indicate the areas where they enjoy visiting or are comfortable in, as well as the places that they do not like or feel safe in (Photo 4.3). Afterwards, each participant shared the story behind her labels with the group and a general discussion ensued about the reasons for depicting these places and whether they enhance or hinder their wellbeing. Some of the findings from this session were used to answer both RQs. The aim of this mapping session was not to analyse the drawings themselves per se, but to prompt discussion, draw out meanings and experiences, the underlying reasons for them and what they represent to the participants (Vigurs and Kara, 2016).

Photo 4.3: Completed map with labels

Vignettes Discussion Group

The second participatory session was a group discussion using vignettes. Prior to my third fieldwork visit, I had analysed some of the data obtained on previous visits and intended to conduct another participatory mapping session with a separate group of research partners to identify any areas of data saturation[29]. However, due to time and venue constraints (see *Fieldnotes, October 2017* below; and Section 9.3.1 on *Limitations of the Study*), we were unable to organise the mapping session. I therefore decided to improvise the mapping activity with the second participatory group by discussing their SWB experiences with vignettes obtained from my previous visits.

[29] According to Fusch and Ness (2015), the principle of data saturation applies when there is 'no new data, no new themes, no new coding, and [the] ability to replicate the study' (p. 1409).

Monday 23/10 – MissQ finally arrived at 10.15am. I was ready and waiting so we left immediately. Having informed 4 potential participants about the study, she called and asked them all to meet us at SGE[30]. When we arrived at school gate (bus stand), she decided to go back to the hostel to collect one of them who said she didn't have the *TP* (transport fare) to meet up with us. I went on to meet the gatekeeper in her office. We chatted for a bit until MissQ and the other 3 arrived. I excused myself and went outside to meet with them. We introduced ourselves – their names are Gloria, Ifunanya and Somadina. They asked lots of questions about the research and indicated their interest to participate in it. We then discussed their availability and decided to meet at 4pm the next day at Gambo Arena, except Somadina who won't be available tomorrow and insisted on her own interview straightaway. For the third time, Dr. C relinquished her office for our use (I am sooo grateful to her, honestly!) MissQ joined the conversation and took notes while I recorded it.

Tuesday 24/10 – [5.05pm] MissQ left us to go and continue typing her project at the cyber-café, so Marian and I waited at school gate waiting for the girls. We were joined by Ifunanya and Gloria, then Nneoma who I had met over the telephone yesterday. The 5 of us made up the Vignettes group.

(Fieldnotes, October 2017)

Vignettes are stories in the form of text or images used to stimulate conversations about participants' opinions, behaviours and beliefs (Hughes, 2004). Constructed from previous research, life histories or from other field collaborators working on the same issues, they can be value-, moral- or ethically-based and are often presented as fictional representations of the social world (Hughes, 2004; Jenkins et al, 2010). I selected anonymised stories from my early analysis that generally represented the wider 'challenging socio-cultural, historical and disabling contextual power situations' (Nwako, 2016 p. 7). At the session, each research partner was invited to select and read out several vignettes, then share her opinion on whether she agreed with it or not; this was followed by a general discussion. An example of the findings from the participatory group session with vignettes is included in Appendix V.

[30] SGE is the School of General Education.

4.4.4 Qualitative Interviews

The final method employed during the study was qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Unlike the structured version, these are more informal and in-depth, leaving some flexibility in adjusting the questions asked according to the interviewee's responses (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009; Edwards and Holland, 2013). The interviews were conducted with six staff members of the university, carefully selected according to their institutional roles and based on the research foci of female students' wellbeing capabilities and gender justice. We were mindful to gather information that was relevant but not time-consuming, since the staff respondents had tight schedules or were busy but had kindly granted us the opportunity for an interview. Some of the interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder as appropriate, for example the interaction with Mr. Omana (security staff at the university's main library) occurred in the busy lobby area of the library hence it was not recorded. However, fieldnotes were taken during all the interviews.

4.4.5 Critique of Methods

Although the advantages of deploying the afore-mentioned methods outweighed the disadvantages, there were challenges encountered with each of them. For instance, I often felt conspicuous whilst taking notes in public places, particularly when covertly observing interactions between my research partners and other people. Also, given that participant observation is 'an inherently subjective exercise' (Mack et al, 2005 p. 15), I endeavoured to consciously report observations with reflexivity about how I was reaching the conclusions and ground my interpretations in the lived experiences of my research partners, as best I could. However, this was not always possible since I was also trying to simultaneously make sense of and challenge my own thoughts, emotions, ideas and reactions to the data being collected during the observations.

During the campus walks, it was easier to keep the conversation going and therefore generate much more data, however frequent stops were necessary for us to take some notes. Although the walks were also more beneficial for visual data than the other sitting interviews, I found it challenging to walk, observe, discuss and write at the same time (Clark and Emmel, 2008).

Audio recording was not used as it would have been too expensive to retain the batteries for such long hours. In addition, the trial recording produced unclear and noisy outcomes especially in outside or public spaces (see Section 9.3.1 for more on the *Limitations of the Study*).

As Nigeria is a country located in the tropics, fieldwork visits occurred either in the dry or rainy seasons. The weather conditions affected the campus walks as it was too hot at certain times of the day, or heavy rains had serious negative effects on the untarred roads around and within the campus. This led to difficulties in mobility, added to research costs (for example, keeping hydrated, buying weather-appropriate footwear, etc.) and was generally defined as undesirable for students' wellbeing (see Chapters 5 and 6). This method also had health and safety implications for female students, which are detailed in the findings and conclusion chapters.

As previously mentioned, audio recording in office environments produced a lot of background noise. In addition, some interview venues seemed to intimidate my research partners at first, for example when we were notified that one lecturer has agreed to an interview and his secretary confirmed that it would be held in 'Oga's[31] office' (Reflections, 2017).

For the semi-structured interviews, it was challenging to find a balance between simultaneous note-taking, checking the audio-recorder and listening intently in order to ask secondary questions. The research partners that were present at such interviews helped to navigate this challenge and we subsequently shared these roles. There were also time pressures to keep an appropriate length of interviews with busy university staff with numerous interruptions. We handled these challenges by keeping our questions to a minimum, allowing longer answers and being conscious of any body language clues that may indicate an imminent end to the interview.

Although I used all these methods, it was not possible to do so with all the participants due to several reasons – timing, convenience and levels of participation (see also the section on *Co-researcher Collaboration* for an empirical explanation of Diagram 4.3). As discussed further in

[31] The term 'Oga' is used in Nigeria to refer to a male senior, boss, master or man in a position of authority.

Chapter 9, the timing of fieldwork visits coincided with periods of staff union strikes and school holidays, therefore some research participants had travelled home or were unavailable to participate in some methods (see Section 4.6). For some, it was a matter of arranging a convenient space and time of day or week; for others, their safety and wellbeing were given ethical consideration. For example, the innovative participatory mapping session was held in the gatekeeper's office which was not large enough to accommodate more than 4 or 5 participants. Similarly, the walking interviews were not an appropriate method to use if a research partner was unwilling or likely to face physical harm or mental trauma by visiting a certain place on campus. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 9.

4.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

For this study, I used Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) to answer the RQs. QDA is defined as,

> the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating.
> (Lewins et al, 2010 para. 1)

QDA comprises numerous forms of analysis, including thematic, case study, narrative, grounded theory, analytic induction, ethnographic and phenomenological analysis (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2013). I chose a narrative approach for its dual purpose of producing thematic and interactional analyses, according to Riessman (2005). As I explain in detail below, this two-pronged process produced abductive[32] knowledge-building through a combination of a bottom-up (inductive) approach from the empirical study and a top-down (deductive) approach which uses already pre-coded themes from the guiding SWB and CA theoretical frameworks and the RQs (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Blaikie, 2010; Ritchie et al, 2013; O'Gorman and Macintosh, 2015).

The analysis was carried out in three phases – data preparation, the analysis process and reporting of findings (see Diagram 4.5).

[32] Blaikie (2009) refers to abductive strategy as an iterative process of testing theory with raw accounts from research in order to generate further theory.

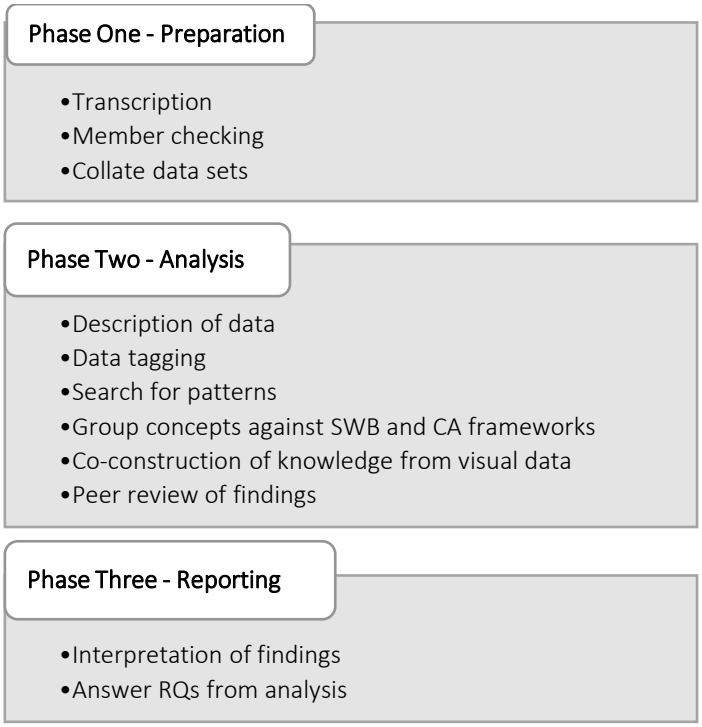


Diagram 4.5: Data analysis process

4.5.1 Phase One – Preparation of the Data

I commenced the data analysis process with four of my research partners during fieldwork. This early start produced insights 'arising from the data, from literature, from one's own head, [which] are constantly interacting with the data as they are collected' (Delamont, 2012 p. 350). The inclusive analytical strategy also promoted group dialogue and debate in sharing mutual understandings or differences of various capabilities and wellbeing perspectives of my research partners (White and Pettit, 2004). In these participatory analysis meetings, we collated the data materials, conducted preliminary member checking (explained in detail below), and devised a simple manual procedure in which previously transcribed data, photocopied handwritten observations and visual data were shared. All textual and visual data were anonymised to protect the respondents' identities. Meanings were clarified and I made some SWB and capabilities links from White's (2010) dimensions and Nussbaum's (2000) list of functionings. Regarding the visual material, it was important to analyse those sources alongside my research partners to correctly interpret any intended contextual nuances and to understand the multiple often complex ideas that images and photos communicate.

After each field visit, I transcribed and carefully anonymised the data before searching for emerging themes or further questions to be addressed during the next visit. On my final return from the field, I collated all the data sets, including the research partners' highlighted narratives and comments, the transcriptions from earlier audio recordings of interviews and the participatory mapping session, my fieldnotes and reflections, and copies of the visual data including photographs, signs and maps. The data was transcribed using Microsoft Word, with each transcription task lasting about 2 hours and resulting in a total number of 38 transcripts. Similarly, I typed up or photocopied the secondary data from text documents, including the institutional policies, announcements, rules and regulations, and bulletins. The transcription process was not just a 'straightforward technical task' (Bailey, 2008 p. 127) but a recursive and interpretive way of representing audible and non-verbal data in the first phase of analysis (ibid).

At this point, I again referred to my research partners or other sources for further information or clarity about the data. Known as member checking, this strategy not only served to confirm or verify the accuracy of the data collected but it also provided the opportunity to thank them for their valued input. They were asked if they had any information to add or amend to their responses. Happel (2012) describes the functions of member checking to 'de-center the authoritative voice of the researcher... and to provide counter narratives to the initial data analysis performed by the researcher' (p. 55). The data were updated with their amendments and additions, and none of the participants withdrew their submissions.

A full set of all the materials and transcripts were then printed out; I thoroughly read through the materials to deeply immerse myself in, and familiarise myself with, the details of the data. I subsequently photocopied two separate datasets with which to analyse the data and present the findings according to each of the RQs.

4.5.2 Phase Two – The Thematic and Interactional Approaches

Drawing from Riessman's (2005) method of narrative analysis, the two approaches used in this phase were thematic and interactional. According to Riessman, 'narratives represent storied ways of knowing and communicating [particularly] oral narratives of personal experience' (p.

1), relatable to studies such as mine. Riessman further suggests three models of narrative analysis as thematic, structural and interactional. Whilst she describes the structural model as the way of telling a story to make it persuasive (p. 3), this was not the main intention of my analysis; rather, the thematic (focusing on content) and interactional (focusing on participation) approaches were better suited to my chosen analytical approach.

The Thematic Approach

> Emphasis is on the content of a text, "what" is said more than "how" it is said, the "told" rather than the "telling". (Riessman, 2005 p. 2)

After preparing the data in phase one, I started with thematic analysis on the textual data. First, I re-read each of the transcripts word for word and tagged the data. Baptiste (2001) refers to tagging as the selection of various sizes of text – words, sentences or paragraphs – relating to the research focus from an unstructured mass of data. Any repetition of ideas, or data that the interviewees or participants deemed as important, was tagged. This was necessary for data reduction[33] purposes and to eliminate irrelevant data (Namey et al, 2008). I noted any emergent concepts, reflections, ideas and insights from the data, some of which formed secondary data that I engaged with as part of my reflexivity process, as suggested by Cohen et al (2007). These emerging aspects were annotated as memos in the margins of the transcripts and helped me later to interconnect different aspects of the data for interpretation (see Appendix III for an example). Having tagged the texts, I systematically searched for regular patterns or relationships between the data. The patterned tags were compared and grouped together into broad concepts. I also noted any data which did not conform to the patterns and placed them aside to be reviewed at the interpretation phase.

The thematic approach was a recursive process that involved repeating the rounds of analysis, using the objectives of the relevant RQ as a guide, I reviewed the data sets including my memos, to test the concepts identified, and re-grouped or amalgamated them for reduction. Some of the data required new tags, which I added. Other tags were discarded if they were not relevant to the RQ. This step resulted in fewer refined concepts. I then checked the revised concepts deductively against the pre-determined dimensions of White's (2010) SWB

[33] Data reduction is 'a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data in such a way that "final" conclusions can be drawn and verified.' (Miles and Huberman, 1994 p. 11)

theoretical framework. These concepts, drawn from both the data and the SWB framework, formed the themes that were used to present the data in Chapters 5 and 6 and became the basis of a new wellbeing conceptual map as a contribution to theory (see Chapter 7). I therefore used the thematic approach to find common aspects from my research partners' stories and to theorise my findings (Riessman, 2005). However, the process did not fully represent the collaborative contributions by my research partners to the other parts of the data analysis, necessitating the interactional approach.

The Interactional Approach

As indicated in Section 4.5.1, the data analysis process commenced during fieldwork with my research partners as part of the co-construction of knowledge. This collaboration reflected the interactional approach which emphasises the dialogic storytelling between participant and researcher in collaborative meaning making (Riessman, 2005). In this approach, 'narratives of experience are occasioned in particular settings, such as medical, social service, and court situations, where storyteller and questioner jointly participate in conversation' (p. 4). From my understanding of Riessman's approach, I was therefore able to engage not just with my research partners, but also with our interaction, their interaction with the environment and more deeply with the data during and after collection. Furthermore, the anonymised transcripts from the study included the research partners' voices as well as mine, and these were portrayed both orally and visually, for example through photographs, maps, artefacts, etc. The use of the interactional approach to analyse the visuals helped to engage my research partners in areas where textual data were not available, for instance in describing the physical challenges that they face with accessing exam timetables and results (see Photo 6.18 of the bus stand in Section 6.3.4). The interactional approach also enriched the participatory process by making the analysis more interesting to my research partners.

Finally, I sent a selection of the anonymised data transcripts to two fellow doctoral researchers at the University of Bristol's School of Education, requesting that they identify patterns which we subsequently discussed for similarities or divergences in findings. I also presented some findings at conferences where I received feedback on other possible interpretations of the data. These interactions provided diverse, nuanced approaches to the data and enabled me to review my own questions and conceptions of the data. The peer review processes added to

the credibility of the analysis and helped with the trustworthiness of the research (see Section 4.7).

4.5.3 Phase Three – Reporting of Findings

As the data analysis progressed, I began to write the findings chapters. My aims in reporting the findings were to interpret the data critically and to answer the RQs through my research partners' voices and mine. According to the relevant RQ, I started off by presenting the original data in descriptive form to give a contextual background from which to answer the question. Using RQ1 as an example, I drew out themes from the analysed data and provided a critical discussion of each of them. Where necessary, I employed visual representation through photographs, 'data quotations and analytic narratives' (Braun et al, 2014 p. 15). The direct quotes from the data represent our voices within the contextual realities. Furthermore, due to the participatory nature of the study, it was important to involve my research partners in making an original, proactive contribution and the chance to own the data, rather than them giving reactive responses. This also gave them agency in the co-creation of knowledge with their stories and visuals.

Presentation of Findings Chapters

Chapters 5 and 6 each begin with setting the scene for answering the RQs and a clarification of some concepts. The sections are organised according to the themes that were raised during the analysis of the data. In addition to the stories of lived experiences, references to previous literature and theories are made throughout the chapters. Some visuals are included for their relevance to the data as they may have been taken and/or requested by my research partners to corroborate their stories. Some of the respondents often expressed themselves using familiar languages such as Igbo and Pidgin English. These are included to provide contextual nuances to the experiences being shared or to stress the importance of what they were saying. It often seemed as if they were more comfortable speaking these other languages. Any such expressions are translated within the text and where applicable, further explanations are given in the footnotes. Italics, square brackets and capital letters were also used to depict non-verbal expressions (if relevant) and to highlight an emphasis on words.

Having described, presented and discussed the findings to each of the RQs in the findings chapters, Chapter 7 synthesises the arguments and develops a new conceptual map from the findings as a contribution to knowledge.

PART III Ethical Considerations

> Moreover, because [qualitative research studies] are about actual people, the assignment makes you think about *ethics* (how you're presenting information, how that information might affect people if made public, being as accurate as you can)… (Kahn, 2011 p. 175).

In light of Kahn's definition of ethics above, ethical concerns were given priority, and were identified and addressed throughout this research process. The University of Bristol outlines a process starting with a reflective discussion with a fellow researcher, and followed by a formal ethics application, which reflects guidelines from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Both sets of guidelines cover a duty to protect the research participants as well as colleagues, sponsors and society through the study. Ethics approval for the study was granted by the University of Bristol in February 2017; this documentation is attached as Appendix IV.

I would argue that the BERA guidelines are rooted in dominant Eurocentric research approaches that do not completely acknowledge postcolonial contexts such as Nigeria. Tikly and Bond (2013) describe such ethics guidelines as human rights-based, developed from Western disciplines of social sciences and are rooted in Western moral philosophy. Some scholars suggest that postcolonial theory can be used to critique Western processes that they describe as hegemonic and rigid; thus, they define postcolonial research ethics as *situated*, *relational*, *dialogic* and *emancipatory* by acknowledging the perspectives of previously colonised peoples and marginalised groups, and ensuring that participants take an active role in the research process (Chilisa, 2012; Tikly and Bond, 2013; Sidhu, 2015). Before exploring each of the above-mentioned terms (in italics), I would submit that postcolonial research ethics also raises critical ethical questions such as ownership of the data, for example, the photographs taken by my research participants in this study were their property that they permitted me to use in this thesis.

Sidhu (2015) argues that *situated* ethics retains a 'critical edge, first by making the specific and particular visible – people and localities, their historical struggles, needs, aspirations and agencies' (p. 74). Furthermore, I indicated in Section 4.2.1 that the relativist ontology involves research that stems from people's perspectives and lived experiences. Likewise, the *relational* form of postcolonial research ethics 'invites researchers to see "self" as a reflection of the researched "Other", to honour and respect the researched as one would wish for oneself, and to feel a belongingness to the researched community without feeling threatened or diminished' (Chilisa et al, 2017 p. 328). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, my background is much the same as that of my research partners: we are all Nigerian women, who have grown up in the postcolonial and patriarchal Nigerian context. From my own experience as an undergraduate at a Nigerian university, I can see similarities between their lives and mine, for example in Nigeria, we use honorifics such as 'sir' or 'ma' to address people who are older than us; then in the university system, they are addressed by their titles rather than their first names. I noticed this trend when my research partners were also reticent to use my first name and I was able to see my younger self reflected in them. I could therefore put myself in their shoes and understand on a more personal level the importance of their contributions, the need to engage in respectful interactions, ensure confidentiality of their data and represent their stories as fairly and accurately as possible.

Due to the continuing patriarchal legacies of colonial rule in the Nigerian HE context (discussed in preceding chapters), the dialogical and emancipatory benefits offered by postcolonial research also applied in my ethical practice. According to Tikly and Bond (2013), *dialogical* ethics promotes respectful discussion and agreement, mutual understanding and establishing trust relations. This meant that during fieldwork, I was constantly aware that I should be prepared to meet the same expectations that I had of my research partners by sharing some information about my own personal life experiences (see *Reflections, 2017* in Section 4.7.1 for an example of ethical decisions that I took to establish a good rapport with and gain the trust of two research partners). *Emancipatory* ethics supports gender justice by challenging the oppressive and discriminatory practices against women in this postcolonial research context. From this understanding, I first practised emancipatory ethics by involving the participants as valued collaborators in this study, to enable their voices to be heard. Second, in Chapters 5 to 9, I use the political injustices experienced by female students as an example of contextual

discriminatory practices. Through this study, I attempted to protect their interests whilst advocating that the HE authorities take responsibility for their emancipation.

Moreover, postcolonial feminist research promotes the 'ethics of care [as] a situated research approach [that gives] attention to relationships and responsibilities in specific [colonised] contexts' (Edwards and Brannelly, 2017 p. 272). An ethics of care fosters the healing, transformation and empowerment of vulnerable, oppressed and disadvantaged participants such as my research partners. As I go on to address in the next section, I tried to work with them to mitigate some of the effects of colonial power imbalances, following Chilisa and Ntseane's (2010) suggestion that:

> A reflective feminist researcher works with communities, listens with compassion and love to the girls/women stories and makes visible their stories and the healing methods that they employ when they communicate their life experiences. (p. 619)

Given the substantive topic of this study therefore, the two ethical areas that I found most important were the wellbeing and safety of the participants as well as the security and management of the research data.

4.6 Safety and Wellbeing of Participants

Feminist research promotes an ethics of care as well as that of representation. As previously discussed, confidentiality and participant anonymity issues were addressed and pseudonyms are used in the reporting of this research. Additionally, every effort was made to guard the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of the participants. For example, apart from the initial meeting with MissQ and Prisca (described below in Section 4.7.1) and the campus walks through my research partners' hostels (see Chapter 5), all other interactions took place in various public spaces. One research partner expressed that she felt uncomfortable walking in certain areas as she was affected negatively by her previous experiences there, a decision which I respected and complied with. Although I made several attempts to reduce the power dynamics between myself and my research partners (for example, interviewing staff together), the attempts also highlighted the potential risks that we faced in conducting the study. Using the same example, interviewing staff together meant that anonymity was not guaranteed;

however, this was balanced by the information and benefits in kind received from such meetings (Nwako, 2020 forthcoming).

Convenient fieldwork dates were mutually agreed so as not to conflict with my research partners' academic timetables, which include examination periods or absences during university closures. According to Robinson-Pant (2005), cross-cultural ethical differences should be considered during the research process; therefore, I adhered carefully to institutional protocols and prevailing cultural norms. For instance, in my role as participant observer and outsider to the institution, I asked questions about and followed my research partners' lead in addressing staff members by their titles and surnames.

One of the ethical characteristics of participatory inquiry is that in ensuring participants' involvement in all or some parts of the research design, further marginalisation is not caused to them (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Creswell, 2009). I therefore did not openly challenge any of the obvious gender-biased occurrences in the field, some of which are discussed later in the findings chapters. Some research partners also reported that their involvement in this study resulted in a heightened critical awareness of gender justice, power and patriarchal issues (see Chapter 9). In a few instances, they felt that this knowledge was detrimental to their wellbeing and when we discussed their concerns, they considered ways in which increased agency could mitigate the concerns. Many research partners indicated positive attitudinal changes towards their wellbeing capabilities, which they gained from participating in the study (Camfield et al, 2009). In addition, I had the opportunity to practise reciprocity with a few of my research partners. For example, Marian stayed at my family home at Nnukwu where she was posted to a secondary school for her teaching practice.

In the writing-up of this thesis finally, I consciously remained committed to obeying the 'ethics of representation' (Kahn, 2011 p. 178), which meant being responsible to depict the voices and experiences of my research partners fairly and accurately. I did this by directly quoting their own words in the findings chapters and interpreting their language and cultural nuances as closely as they were expressed.

4.6.1 Data Management and Security

As part of seeking their consent, my research partners were informed about how their data will be managed, stored and used. All personal information has been used for this research purpose only and safeguarded according to the Data Protection Act 1998, subsequently updated in 2018 (Gov.uk, 2018). During the study, there was no serious information that required disclosure to the gatekeeper/institution or any other appropriate authorities. Also, the research partners in the participatory mapping and vignettes discussion groups established ground rules for respecting each other's confidentiality. All the vignettes used were anonymised. I trusted that my co-researcher MissQ would keep her commitment to confidentiality as she was able to view her peers' data during the analysis process (see *Co-researcher Collaboration* in Section 4.3.2).

Written data and drawings were collected in notebooks and mapping sheets, all of which were kept in my possession whilst in the field and during transit. Together with all other research materials, they were secured in a locked cupboard in my home. Likewise, digital recordings and computer memory sticks were deleted after transcription and the data were transferred to a password protected computer on the University of Bristol server. I was in regular contact with the gatekeeper and research partners via online methods such as email accounts and WhatsApp messages to exchange news, collect data and discuss ongoing support or collaboration. All such communication was also downloaded to the University of Bristol server and deleted from the mobile or portable devices used. Finally, my research partners and institution were informed that they would be able to request an electronic version of the research findings by email. They were also made aware that these may be available to current and future University of Bristol students, shared as journal articles and presented at seminars or conferences.

4.7 Research Trustworthiness

Whilst reliability and validity are the criteria used to evaluate quantitative research studies, qualitative research assesses the trustworthiness (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008) of the data, of the research process and of the analysis. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985),

trustworthiness in research entails five areas of focus: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity. Taken respectively, these involve linking the study to the theoretical framework, the ability to transfer the findings to other contexts, ensuring the consistency of data and findings, reducing bias and acknowledging the influence of my positioning and participation in the study (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008).

Transferability is the provision of evidence that research findings can be transferred to other contexts. Although this is one criticism of the case study approach (see Section 4.3), the discussion in the following chapters shows that SWB concepts and its related participants' experiences can be used to meaningfully impact other capabilities and wellbeing situations. As I will address further in Chapter 8, the study findings and recommendations are transferable to other female students at UniSEN and in similar HE contexts in Nigeria and internationally, or to address issues of gender justice particularly in SSA.

To enhance the trustworthiness of my study, three strategies were employed namely, triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity. Triangulation has previously been discussed in Section 4.4 as one rationale for deploying multiple methods of data collection and analysis. The dependability of the study rested on the choice of methods employed to collect and analyse data to obtain reliable findings. Triangulation also ensured that the results of the study closely reflect the views and perspectives of the participants, thereby reducing researcher bias (Hoets, 2009; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). Also, member checking of data transcripts and peer reviews of the analysed data underpinned the credibility of this study, as discussed in Section 4.5.1.

4.7.1 Reflexivity

Engaging in constant reflexivity throughout the research process enabled me to make sense of my thoughts, experiences, assumptions and biases in relation to the contextual realities of the participants and the data being produced. Archer (2010) defines reflexivity as a 'regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa' (p. i). One of the key traits of a qualitative researcher therefore, in ensuring ethical participatory inquiry, is reflexivity or self-critical reflection (White

and Pettit, 2004). This is because the quality of relationships formed between researchers and participants, as well as the way in which the research is carried out, has a direct bearing on the validity of results. I would argue that this being a subjective study, the findings are no less valid because reflexivity was used as a tool to validate my ethical actions and reactions. For instance, one of the characteristics of qualitative research, and which applies to fieldwork in different cultural contexts, is that it allows for flexibility and adaptability. At the onset of this study, there was no plan to involve any male students however the emergent approach in qualitative research enabled me to make use of useful opportunities that were naturally occurring in the process of data collection. Although I was able to have informal chats with MissQ's male neighbour when I visited her hostel (see Section 6.1.2 where she made a reference to him) as well as other male students that we met during the campus walks, Edwin's involvement in the study was more fortuitous (see Table 4.2). Firstly, he was a student who was not only familiar to me from Mbata, but also happened to be attending the Teaching Practice Orientation (TPO) session for 300 Level students to which I had been invited by my gatekeeper (see Section 4.3.1). Secondly, it was Edwin who introduced me to Marian at the same TPO session (see *Whose Voices?* in Chapter 5) – a snowballing sample of participant recruitment. I reflected on the complexities associated with including my conversations with him as data and decided that his contribution was important, not only for knowledge construction on students' wellbeing, but also to gain insights into some of the discriminatory and stereotypical treatment meted out to female students by their male peers. These contextual practices helped me to understand the emancipatory benefits of gender justice using postcolonial research ethics (Tikly and Bond, 2013). I further considered that Edwin could provide an equally valuable, albeit different, perspective to those of the staff members and research partners, potentially improving researcher reflexivity (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Thus, Edwin's contribution as a male participant added a counterbalance to the otherwise female-only perspective offered by myself and my research partners; also enabling us to consider some of our immediate assumptions about perceptions of wellbeing.

The following narration from my fieldwork journal is another example of reflexivity in consideration of the safety and wellbeing of the participants.

Today is my birthday! I am excited to start proper fieldwork today and especially to see MissQ and Prisca again after 8 whole months of online communications. They both sent happy birthday texts and WhatsApp messages this morning. Prisca also called several times to ask what time I will arrive in Ajuba. She sounded keen to arrange our meeting, which I found heartening!

...After lunch with Jacob at Bonny (a popular area in Ajuba town), I called Prisca and MissQ, asked them to meet me at his office and gave them the directions. When we arrived there, they were waiting. We shared long, tight hugs like we had known ourselves for ages 😊 After some general discussion, it was time to leave Jacob's office. They asked if we could return to the hotel where I was staying. I did not feel entirely comfortable with this suggestion because I was concerned that it would distort the professional researcher image that I felt I should maintain. My mind ran quickly over the layout of the hotel and several questions sprang to mind – Is there a meeting room where we can hang out? How ethical is it to 'host' them in my room? What are the power balance issues that I need to consider? But did I not initiate the study, and request their participation? Then how else would they trust my intentions? So I told myself to relax and agreed because:

- there was no other option or venue at which to meet,
- I saw today not as the formal start of fieldwork but rather an informal reunion,
- I was reluctant to break the trust we had built up over the last 8 months when we first met.

Jacob kindly dropped us off at the hotel. When we got into my room, I was very surprised to find how quickly MissQ and Prisca became relaxed. They asked for the air-conditioner to be turned on and wanted to charge their phones. MissQ leaned her back against the headboard, thereby sitting up in the bed. I also observed that as we chatted, Prisca unbuttoned her jeans and lay across the bed. On reflection, I found her less forthcoming on WhatsApp but friendlier and more engaging in person.

After about 2 hours of chatting about their studies and project work, Prisca admitted that they had planned to take me out for a surprise meal and buy a small birthday cake but were unable to raise the funds. Moved by their good intentions, I insisted that we still go out to an eatery to celebrate the birthday and that I would host them as my guests.

(Reflections, 2017)

Archer (2003) refers to the above as the 'generative ability to be able to carry out... internal deliberations on external reality' (p. 20). She further outlines four types of internal deliberations or conversations as communicative, autonomous, meta-reflexivity and fractured

reflexivity. During this collaborative study, I practised communicative reflexivity, which requires researchers to seek out the input of others to make sense of their own thoughts and experiences, and therefore involves dialogue and 'reflexive deliberations' (p. 26). As part of communicative reflexivity, as well as to validate and/or challenge my own biases, I shared and discussed the findings with my peers at the School of Education's Doctoral Learning Community (see Section 4.5.1), in research groups such as the Faculty's Participatory Action Research group and at conference presentations.

The issue of ethical reflexivity was also closely related to my research positionality and identity (discussed at the beginning of this chapter). As an in-betweener, I often critically appraised the ways in which my values, language, actions and mannerisms may influence the study (Giampapa, 2011; Brew et al, 2012). For example, as an outsider I was mindful not to disrespect, defend or filter any opposing or alternative views of the groups of students, staff or the university authorities (White and Pettit, 2004). Likewise, I had the insider ability to be able to relate with the issues faced by the participants which enabled me to understand their lived experiences. I practised ethical reflexivity throughout the research process, by reflecting continuously on my interactions with my research partners and other respondents, with the literature, in engaging with the data during analysis, and in the reporting of findings.

Summary

This chapter has set out my research positionality, the philosophical approach of relativism and the postcolonial feminist lens through which I approached this study on the wellbeing capabilities of female undergraduate students, together with the critical participatory research methodology used. I also explained the rationale behind the choice of UniSEN as a case study, and I described the selection of the gatekeeper, fifteen research partners including one co-researcher, whose profiles were briefly outlined. Subsequently, I detailed the multiple methods used to collect data, including observations and fieldnotes, campus walks, participatory mapping sessions and qualitative interviews; I further showed how these methods addressed the research questions and achieved the research purpose. The qualitative data analysis process was communicated as thematic and interactional approaches from the narrative tradition. This portrays a coherent trail linking the theoretical frameworks

of subjective wellbeing and the capability approach to the research design and culminating in the empirical findings. My critically reflexive role was evident throughout the sections and highlighted at the end for trustworthiness and ethical research. The findings are discussed in the following two chapters, according to the relevant research questions.

-5- Experiences of Subjective Wellbeing

Setting the Scene

This chapter answers the first research question (RQ): *How do the female undergraduate students experience wellbeing?* Following on from the brief introduction to my research partners in Section 4.3.2 of Chapter 4, in this chapter I will first provide their profiles as prioritised voices in the thesis. Subsequently, I present the findings to the research question and discuss them using previous literature. The literature discussion serves to provide context for understanding the voices of the young women, and as a basis for comparison and/or critique.

Whose Voices?

MissQ

In the research design chapter, I identified MissQ as a co-researcher since she was my main collaborator during the study. She was involved in most of the data collection methods, including individual discussions and campus walks; she wrote some of her own fieldnotes, participated in the group mapping session, prepared schedules and interviewed the ASUU Chairman, took photographs as visual data, and conducted the snowball sampling of participants. We also communicated every other day during the research period via WhatsApp chats and sometimes over the telephone. Most of the findings are therefore framed around her story. When we first met (see *Fieldnotes, August 2016* in Section 4.3.2), she was a third year Psychology student. On my subsequent visits during the ASUU strike, she remained at UniSEN attending Asian classes even after completing her final year project and defence. The first of 4 children from a close-knit family, MissQ shares a room in one of the Ivenso hostels with her sister Ije who is also a research partner in this study (see below). Her pseudonym MissQ comes from her nickname 'Questionnaire'. As she explained, 'People always call me that because they said I always bombard them with questions. *Mana asim kam juta ọfuma maka*

na onye na aju ajuju anara efu uzo [But I tell myself to ask properly because someone who asks questions does not get lost]'.

Chimdi

I met Chimdi through the gatekeeper during my pilot study visit and at the time she was in her final year of a Science Education programme. I was able to conduct part of the pilot study with her as she completed and defended her project on 'Role of ICT on Effective Learning Process' and then graduated from the university. Chimdi is the youngest of 6 children; she complained that 'there is so much population in my family'. Her parents were unable to fund her education, and she therefore had to put herself through university by working on several small businesses such as providing student tutorials and baking chinchin[34] and cakes to distribute to supermarkets. She is the only research partner who practises the Jewish faith (the other research partners were Christians) and so did not participate in the study on Fridays and Saturdays in order to prepare for and attend the Synagogue each week. Chimdi and I communicated frequently on WhatsApp.

Prisca

I first met Prisca during my pilot study visit when she was in her third year of study. She had started her final year project work during my second visit in April 2017 and she defended her work during my last fieldwork visit in October 2017. As a Psychology student, her project focus was on 'Gender and leadership style as correlates of employee performance'. We were only able to have two long informal discussions because she lives at home with her parents in Ajuba town and could not therefore commit to many sessions with me. However, we had many more chats through WhatsApp.

Nina and Kelechi

I arranged to meet Nina at the Faculty of Law in the University on an informal basis as she is a family friend. She lives in Gozie Hall, one of the hostels within campus. Nina invited me to visit

[34] 'Chinchin is a fried snack popular in West Africa. It is a sweet, cookie-like product made from wheat flour and egg (Akubor, 2004). It is usually kneaded and cut into small sizes prior to frying. Wheat flour is the main raw material and therefore there is need to enrich it with adequate protein and fiber sources' (Adebayo-Oyetoro et al, 2017 p. 3).

her room, where she introduced me to Kelechi. They requested details about the research topic and both expressed an interest in taking part in the study. They were 300 Level Law students, share the same birthday, and their families live in Mbata[35] so they also visit each other during the holidays.

Ije

A first-year student of Statistics, Ije was introduced to me by her older sister and roommate, MissQ. Although she was in the middle of her examinations, she joined us on a campus walk, and focused her narrative on the Health Centre. We also had several informal conversations in their hostel room and at a few eateries. Ije had two copies of the latest University Information Handbook (2016) and supplied me with one.

Akudo and Patricia

I met Akudo and Patricia when they attended the teaching practice orientation session, to which I was invited by my gatekeeper. They are both in 300 Level. Akudo studies Integrated Science, and Patricia is in Science Education. They asked to be interviewed together because they were leaving for their holidays two days after our meeting.

Celine

Although I first met Celine a few years ago when we were members of the same church in Abuja, I was unaware that she is a UniSEN student until the morning I got off a bus at the school gate and I heard someone call out 'Aunty Zibah'. After explaining the purpose of my visit to UniSEN, Celine became interested in the study and asked to participate in it. A Mass Communications student, she lives in one of the hostels at Ivenso and attended the participatory group mapping session (see *Fieldnotes, April 2017* below).

Marian

At the teaching practice orientation (TPO) session, Marian was introduced to me by Edwin (the only male student that I interacted with) as his classmate. She is the only non-Igbo speaking

[35] Mbata is a larger city and state capital in the South-East of Nigeria. Mine and the most of the research partners' families live in Mbata.

student, from another state in the South-South region of Nigeria. From her teaching practice, she informed me of her aspiration to become a 'good Mathematics teacher'. Marian took part in both participatory group sessions (mapping – see *Fieldnotes, April 2017* below – and vignettes), took me on a campus walk, and was present at the interviews of two members of staff. She lives inside Ajuba town and commutes to school daily. Marian is the last child of seven, and both her parents have died. Given the limited support she receives from her siblings, she tries to engage herself in petty trading – buying and selling of second-hand clothes.

Dumebi

A part-time Continuing Education Programme (CEP) student in 600 Level (the equivalent of 3rd year), Dumebi studies Computer Science and works full-time as an administrative staff member in one of the departments of the university. Having met her briefly on my first visit, the gatekeeper subsequently informed her about the study and she had expressed her willingness to take part in it. She lives off-campus at Government Quarters. Dumebi participated in the group mapping session as described below:

> I met MissQ at school gate and we made our way to SGE, arriving just before 10am. As Dumebi already works there, she opened the door to Dr. C's office and we settled in. I was finally able to send Celine a text message giving her directions and she turned up, albeit late. Marian had received the message through Edwin and she came too.
>
> I think that four participants made for a manageable group but since none of them had met each other before, I sensed some initial hesitation. Introductions were made, I explained the purpose of the study, answered their questions and obtained consent to take part in it. Dumebi laid out the refreshments I had brought and we started the session.
>
> The activity itself lasted longer than 2 hours. This was because they took some time to draw the campus map to their satisfaction. It seemed important to them to achieve this; therefore, I was hesitant to hurry them along too much.
>
> I observed that personality wise, Dumebi came across as a sharp, no-nonsense, independent person. Celine was friendly, engaging and infectious. At first, Marian was the most reserved of all, careful and meticulous with the map drawing. Initially, MissQ appeared aloof, sitting slightly apart from the rest of us. I assumed that perhaps she needed more time to get to know the others and to flow with them. The second part of the session was more animated as they shared their experiences of life as female students, both on

> and off the campus. By then, they were all more friendly and empathetic towards each other. The dynamics of the session had changed!
>
> (Fieldnotes, April 2017)

Gloria, Ifunanya, Nneoma and Somadina

These four remaining research partners were recruited by MissQ during my final fieldwork visit through the snowball strategy described in Chapter 4. The plan was to conduct a second group mapping session but co-ordinating a time and place for everyone proved challenging (see *Fieldnotes, October 2017* in Section 4.4.3). When we finally arranged a suitable meeting, Gloria, Ifunanya and Nneoma were in attendance, and we were joined by Marian. As explained in Chapter 4, I decided to modify the method to use vignettes, as the timing and venue were not as conducive for the students.

Somadina was unable to attend the vignettes group session, so myself and MissQ conducted an interview with her alone using the same semi-structured questions from the participatory mapping discussion. Somadina, who lives in a hostel in Ivenso, is in her third year of studying Parasitology and Entomology.

Zibah

As previously stated, my own interpretive voice is woven throughout the findings and conclusion chapters (see also Chapter 4 for a discussion of my role as a human instrument). Through the outsider part of my in-betweener positionality, I tried to relate to my research partners' experiences through my lens as a student (albeit postgraduate) as a woman, as a Nigerian, reflecting on my time as an undergraduate student in Nigeria, and regarding my own wellbeing status. Being the main researcher in the study and the author of this thesis, my voice is likely to feature more than those of my research partners as I link the data to previous literature, in the preceding chapters, in the representation and discussion of the findings and in the recommendations (Chapters 7 and 8). However, I made every effort to keep my research partners' words exactly as they were spoken to honour their voices and the spaces where they participated in data analysis. This strategy, together with colleagues' assistance with member checking of findings, demonstrates my efforts to alleviate the danger of my voice becoming more dominant than theirs.

Conceptualising Wellbeing

This chapter is framed around my interactions with the primary sources and their stories about their experiences in relation to the substantive topic of wellbeing capabilities. One of my initial questions to the research participants was to ask for their brief, general understandings of what wellbeing means for an individual. MissQ replied that it is 'wholeness of self' and reiterated 'everything about you' *[she said this whilst gesturing at me by waving her right hand up and down from top to bottom]*. Other research partners related it to external events and issues that occur in their surrounding areas:

> *Okwa ka ife si eme anyi* [is it not what happens to us]? I don't know… like when we don't have light or water in my hostel. It affects me oh, all this going to fetch or buy water when I should be reading. (Celine)

> Mine is like when I'm coming to school from home and can find keke or bus so that at least I will not be late for lecture. (Prisca)

> I think it's what happens around that seem unpleasant to me, how I'm being treated in my departments and what rules I think should be taken off because it does not suit my way of life. (Chimdi)

These responses indicate that their fundamental understanding of wellbeing[36] seems to be extrinsically linked to the state of their welfare[37], and how their environment has either a positive or negative effect on them as individuals. In relation to White's (2010) wellbeing framework in Chapter 2, the afore-mentioned conceptualisations are highlighted in all three dimensions. Chimdi's answer is reflected in White's subjective and relational dimensions as the former covers people's perceptions of their positions (whether material, social or human), and the latter their identities and social relations. Likewise, Celine and Prisca's references to the lack of essential utilities and transportation needs fall into White's relational dimension of

[36] According to Crisp (2016), the conceptual term 'well-being' widely encompasses the philosophical idea of what is good for a person or how well their life is going for them, and often includes both the positive and negative (ill-being) aspects of life.

[37] Welfare is defined in Chapter 2 as 'the senses relating to wellbeing [and] the state or condition of doing well [including] the provision of initiatives, funding or facilities within a business or other institution to maintain or improve the well-being of workers, students, etc.' (Oxford University Press, 2019 para. 1,4).

access to public goods and the material dimension that encompasses their welfare and standards of living. White (2010) states that the inter-relationship between the three dimensions make up an individual's wellbeing.

When I asked further the ways in which these welfare issues affect each of them in particular, a couple of the research partners alluded to the interaction between their inner and outer wellbeing conditions, for example,

> It's about my state of mind, it means looking inwards and outwards too… the state of mind you are in – emotionally, physically, mentally. Also how you respond and adapt to your environment. (Kelechi)

However, it was Akudo's expression: 'For me oh, it is how things touch me personally' that provides an intriguing slant to the definition, and frames part one of the arguments that I will explore more fully in Chapter 7. When asked to expatiate on her definition, she replied: 'I don't know how to explain it more… As in my "person", my "inside", like "my inner being". *Dika ife n'emetu m aka n'ime obi m* [like that thing that touches me inside my heart].'

Kelechi and Akudo's descriptions reflect three of the central human functional capabilities for wellbeing on Nussbaum's (2000) CA list, namely, senses, imagination and thought, emotions and practical reason. Their responses also shifted my understanding from the surface level of their general external welfare experiences to the deeper internal wellbeing capabilities.

My research partners' stories enabled me to understand their feelings and emotions on topics, activities, situations and places that cover their positive or negative experiences. They used terms such as happy, stress, trust, worried, pleasant, fail, God, angry, surprise, hate, upset, boring, hunger, bad, powerful, jittery, afraid, sad, healthy, frustrated, fine, shock, annoying/ed; these were some of the keywords that guided the analysis for this RQ.

The following themes cover their wellbeing experiences – feelings and emotions, religion and spirituality, health and safety, and being female. Each of these is presented below.

5.1 Feelings and Emotions

As Kelechi's 'state of mind' idea above, wellbeing is linked to a female student's feelings and emotions; it is a strong and continuous sense of self-reflection and looking inwards:

> I think that as girls, we feel a lot. And we are always thinking and worrying. More than the boys. Their own is just to get up and go, we have to take our time first before we even get to where they arrived a long time ago. (Nina)

There is also a differentiation between the sexes:

> I am the 3rd (middle) child of 5, the rest are boys. Boys deviate. They think differently… Me I think Ajuba is boring. It curtails our movement and the way we think about life. There is no balling or chiking[38] here, and limited places to go to. So I'm always in the hostel thinking. I used to think a lot as a child. Then my nickname was 'Tuzaqueen' – *you too dey do oversabi* [you act as if you know too much]. Now I'm more aware of myself, to think of what we've thought. Reflecting. More like a retreat. Assess life. (Kelechi)

Although this affirms Diener et al's (2002) affective element of SWB as emotions, feelings and moods, their study did not ascribe them to male or female domains. I wondered therefore whether Kelechi's thoughts above were linked to her personality or if perhaps they stemmed from the social constructs of gender characteristics within the Nigerian context; for example, are women supposed to be quieter and more thoughtful than men? Stereotypical expectations and gender biases are discussed further in the section below on *Being Female*.

Some negative emotions that affect the research partners' SWB pertain to failure and stress:

> You can imagine how bad a student feels if their performance is based on the marking scheme and lecturers' teaching styles – some like that and some are different. (MissQ)

> I am feeling a bit stressed now… because of work and getting ready for my exams, starting Friday. (Dumebi)

[38] 'Balling' and 'Chiking' are slang phrases used by young people in Nigeria.
'Balling' means to splash out whilst spending money, having a nice time or living in affluence.
'Chiking', also known as 'toasting' or 'tuning', is attempting to ask a girl out or to ask her to be one's girlfriend.

Fear is another emotion expressed in many of the findings, not only in relation to the pervading institutional culture, but also as the underlying reason why the research partners feel powerless to respond to threats to their wellbeing. As I discuss further below, their fears include being prevented from progressing academically or graduating, victimisation, and cultural reprisals.

Positive feelings were derived from their personal interests, hobbies and activities. These help to develop their wellbeing and give them a sense of identity and worth:

> As we approached her hostel, I notice a big space of land beside it and asked what it is used for.
>
> MissQ: The boys play football there in the evenings. And because my room is at the end of the building, the girls gather outside my window to be watching and cheering. But they make so much noise that I cannot read or study during the day. So instead I listen to music, like if I'm angry or depressed, it brings me back... any type of music – hip-hop, countryside, blues. I also read magazines and interesting books because I learn lots of things from them. I enjoy cooking and being in the kitchen trying to cook new dishes. I like making people happy.
>
> (Fieldnotes, April 2017)

Most of the research partners enjoy 'hanging out with' friends for relaxation. They spend time in each other's hostel rooms and party together on some weekends. A few of them describe themselves as having a quiet character and prefer to spend more time alone. Nonetheless, when they do form attachments with other people, they experience emotions such as love, care, frustration, sadness and anger. However, their concerns and fears in their relationships with others often impacted on the development of their emotional wellbeing, listed as one of Nussbaum's (2000) central human capabilities. She further posits that 'supporting this capability [emotions] means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their [overall] development' (p. 79). According to Walker (2017) also, having relationships of mutual respect, recognition and according dignity to one another is an important functioning for realising the capability of affiliation. However, Nussbaum (2000) separates affiliation into two parts – the ability to live, engage and interact with others; and being treated with dignity and respect without being discriminated against on any level. Although it is evident from the relationships the research partners maintain with their peers

that part of this capability is being met, the critical issue of discrimination still exists. This issue will be discussed further in the sections and chapter to follow.

Personal hobbies and leisurely interests form an important part of my research partners' experiences, as indicated by Somadina:

> I have a hobby since my childhood which is reading my book every day. Whether I go to school or not, I enjoy reading. As in, I can't stay a day without reading my book. Even if I don't read my lecture books, I can also engage myself in other inspirational and motivational books… like Robert Kiyosaki's books 'Rich Dad, Poor Dad', 'Why you act the way you do', and some others.
>
> I'm also a fan of playing games. Anytime I have problem, anytime I'm not feeling too well, I play games and the games also help to ease off my stress. And I play music too. Though I'm not good at dancing but I love to play music, some few music that interests me. For example, Rihanna. I love listening to her musics *{sic}*, as in that's the main music I do listen to almost every day.

MissQ also explained that different societies and associations run by the Catholic Church organise activities and games for the students. There is the annual St. Albert's Game, where they compete for a trophy:

> It was the Chaplain who suggested that 'not every time church-church, sometimes there should also be games, activities and events'. So they arrange one every semester. The games we have done so far are football, boys cooking, sack race, WOTS [a popular card game played in Nigeria], girls weightlifting, egg & spoon race, basketball and volleyball.

Following previous research on student wellbeing in New Zealand, Soutter (2011) reports that having hobbies and interests is beneficial to individual wellbeing and improves the quality of life for students. Likewise, one of Nussbaum's (2000) listed capabilities is play, including 'being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities' (p. 80). Given this, I decided to explore the extent to which UniSEN provided opportunities for extra-curricular activities for students; I discuss this below in the section on *Physical Health*.

Beyond the above-mentioned games and activities, and closely linked to the deeper feelings and emotions described by my research partners, was the role of the Church and religion in enhancing their SWB; I discuss the role of religion and spirituality in the following section.

5.2 Religion and Spirituality

The aspect of religion and spirituality is deemed important as it pertains to each research partner's personal faith and religious commitments. In our daily interactions, the word 'God' was used in various forms and references, including attributions to their feelings of achievement and successes:

> But my God favoured me. I made 68 for just answering two questions. Was quite amazed with the grade because if you fail to answer any compulsory question in Psychology you've started failing already. But I read the course extensively and God's grace I think, made the lecturer forgot *{sic}* he gave compulsory question. (MissQ)
>
> It's God oh and has been him all the way. (Prisca)
>
> Yeah, just the introductory part of the lectures I don't like missing cause I can actually get all I need to know from that but I trust God I'll still catch up. *Oluwa*[39] is involved you know. (Ifunanya)
>
> I'm fine oh, thanks to God I made it to a new day. (Marian)
>
> My hope and trust is on God! (Akudo)
>
> *Okwa so so Chukwu* [It is only God]!! (Kelechi)
>
> Yes, very great but UniSEN's standard is totally the opposite of that but Jehovah has always been my help and strength. (Chimdi)
>
> All dey Baba God hands oh, cause this people can be life shockers …As in eeeehhhh? Na God oh! I just dey imagine if to say they changed the venue [for her Industrial Training Programme] what will I do? All the expenses. Thank God oh! (MissQ)
>
> Good news! My first semester's result are *{sic}* wonderful. It's awesome, yes. It was A, A, B, A, A, B, A. For seven courses… Hmmm. It's God oh! I'm so happy. (Marian)
>
> God has been my source of strength. I have seminar defence Friday. Exam Saturday then the upper weekend. (Dumebi)

[39] 'Oluwa' is one of the names of God in Yoruba language (one of the 3 main languages spoken in Nigeria, the other two are Igbo and Hausa). 'Oluwa is involved' has become a slang in everyday speech in Nigeria.

Since religion plays a crucial role for most people in the South-East of Nigeria (Willott, 2009), I surmised from my research partners' stories that their daily lives are somewhat defined by their beliefs and faiths, and the influence of spirituality on their wellbeing. Citing the Government of Anambra State (2014), Nwako (2015) posits that

> the Igbos place a strong emphasis on their ritualistic religion of worshipping the traditional gods and in a strange paradox, also embraced the modern Western religion of Christianity, with most families practising as Catholics or Anglicans. (p. 15)

Conversely, Makama's (2007) study suggests that the high number of churches and mosques on university campuses may point to the importance of religion in influencing students' moral behaviour. One research partner, who asked for complete anonymity in reporting her answer, shared with me the immense pressure from her boyfriend to indulge in sexual activity with him. However, as a Catholic girl, she chose to adhere to her beliefs and preserve her self-worth by remaining a virgin until she is ready to get married. Her religion therefore appeared to guide her life decisions.

Regular attendance at church also seems to be an important aspect for my research partners as MissQ stated: 'I like St. Albert's Church because 'it's my "quiet" place'. Likewise, Kelechi frequently attends St. Patrick's Society and Legion of Mary because they help her spiritual life. Marian also goes to the Catholic Church because she receives inspiration from the Reverend Father there.

Dumebi agrees about Church for different reasons:

> I attend the Kingdom Pentecostal Church. I have grown spiritually. My work there keeps me busy through activities, prayers, meetings. I am a leader. People look up to me and I give them reason to.

Chimdi asked not to participate in the study on Fridays and Saturdays because she needs the time to prepare for and attend the Synagogue each week.

Leondari and Gialamas (2009) investigate the relationship between religiosity and wellbeing with a sample of Greek Orthodox Christians aged 18 to 48 years. They conclude that 'personal devotion, participation in religious activities, and religious salience are positively associated with… well-being' (p. 241). They also reported that 95% of their respondents were female university students or graduates, and that women were generally more religious than men.

Church attendance, frequency of prayer and references to beliefs in God were particularly practised and related to an improvement in quality of life. Similarly, daily spiritual experience was one of the results of Perez's (2012) study on gender differences in aspects of wellbeing among Filipino students. In addition to spiritual wellbeing, the importance of physical health and personal safety was discussed by my research partners as detailed in the following section.

5.3 Health and Safety

In terms of wellbeing, three aspects of health and safety were discussed: physical activities, individual health experiences and personal safety.

5.3.1 Physical Activities

Nina develops her physical wellbeing through jogging and exercising:

> This is why I prefer the freedom of being at school, because when I'm at home [in Mbata] I would like to go to Obioma Parade for exercise every morning but Mummy says no, it's too far and it's not safe for me as a girl.

This statement resonates with MissQ's description earlier about boys playing football and girls watching and cheering; it made me question if there are any existing stereotypes regarding male versus female sports. However, this supposition was refuted below by Somadina:

> …there's one thing I love about the campus life. Sometimes they do other extra-curriculum activities like sports. And I'm a fan of sports. I run, I play badminton, I'm not so good at volleyball but sometimes I do join them to train myself. Then I play football. And I can say that I won two awards – playing badminton and running – in this school. I won 2 golden medals. So, I enjoy the extra-curriculum activities in school.

In addition, UniSEN's policy for students' physical health through sports and recreation is well documented. For instance, one of the minimum academic standards listed in the General and Academic Regulations booklet is 'extra-curricula activities such as sports etc.' (p. 7). Also, the Sports Directorate organises an annual football competition for female hostels on campus, supported by the University Women's Association (UniSEN Bulletin, 2016).

Supporting the above, Lovell et al (2010) studied the perceptions of the advantages and obstacles to exercise by female university students in the United Kingdom. Their results highlight the importance of regular physical activity for young women at university to promote their physiological and psychological wellbeing. Adesina (2016) also posits that social and environmental factors affect the physical health and active lifestyles of young people; factors include peer influences, availability of time and adequate resources.

Moreover, for Nina, Somadina and other female students, opportunities for participating in sports and physical activities are functionings which relate to their values (areas that they have reason to value) which in turn help them to identify and prioritise their health and wellbeing capabilities (Vaughan and Walker, 2012).

5.3.2 Individual Health Experiences

Some research partners were concerned about the link between their health and their wellbeing; not particularly the potential to be ill, but the standard of treatment received when this did happen. MissQ's narrative of one such experience affected her mental and physical wellbeing:

> I was not feeling fine so I came to the health clinic with my 'Tship' card… I showed them my card and collected my folder I waited another 2 hours before they called me. In fact if you go in without being called, they will make you wait extra time. I was now scared.
>
> Later they called me and I went in to see a female doctor. I explained how I was feeling… She wrote down one or two things then told me to go and get some drugs from the dispensary. [Did she examine you at all?] NOTHING!!! Just from how I was feeling. After 2 weeks, the thing did not really go so I came back here. It was the same doctor as before. I was now angry because exams *abiabago* [are coming] and I don't really need that stress. She asked me the same questions like before. Then she got angry because I said I still wasn't feeling better. She asked me 'Are you teaching me my work?'
>
> While she was doing a vaginal swab, the ogbanje[40] nurse hurt me. I shouted from the pain. She said I should stop shouting that 'this thing and my

[40] 'Ogbanje' is an Igbo word that describes a reincarnated person (Nzewi, 2001). In Igbo culture, it is believed that when a mother gives birth more than once (recurrent) and the babies die early, the

> boyfriend's penis, which is more hard, so why are you shouting? Don't insult me oh! Just stay and let me do what you came for because so many people are waiting for me'. …She didn't even tell me sorry. Nothing. Not empathetic or remorse *{sic}* …Since then anytime I see her, I don't answer or greet her or anything. To me, first impressions matter a lot! And I will never go back there.

This story is one of many that demonstrates some research partners' feelings of being upset, devalued, disrespected, and intimidated by adults whose responsibility it was to care for them. MissQ was not reassured in any way; rather, she recounts experiencing deep mental and physical pain. This led to her use of the word *ogbanje* [a wicked person] (see footnote) to describe the callous treatment she received from the nurse. It also affected her wellbeing functioning to maintain a healthy and safe body (Deneulin and McGregor, 2009), and her capability to preserve her bodily integrity (Nussbaum, 2000).

Similar experiences shared by Ije and other research partners are detailed in Chapter 6, but it was from Ifunanya's examples that I realised the extent to which female students lacked confidence in the university's medical care system. Below is one such story:

> … and even in my hostel, a girl put to bed. She's a first year student so it's like she got pregnant before coming to school and she nursed the pregnancy here in school. According to her roommate, she was tying the pregnancy without anybody knowing. Maybe she tried to get rid of the baby in several occasions but the baby wouldn't go. As the tummy was popping out, she had to tie it. And then she was going out in one kind bogus clothes all the time and when they asked her why, she'll always tell them that she's having kidney problem. She kept on and nursed the pregnancy until it was due. On the D-day, she was trying to go out and everything started in the hostel. She started screaming so other students from neighbouring hostels came to her rescue and she put to bed there. Those with experience, those without experience, they had to look for scissors and… only God! God protects the defenceless. He knows that is just the condition or situation, and He protected them. But imagine some place that is not that clean enough for such kind of thing, and scissors that is not sterilised, nobody knows from where they got it, they had to use it to cut the umbilical cord before whatever whatever. The girl was nursing the baby in the hostel before this vacation then her Mum had to come and take her home. So these are some of the problems that are going on within the school, around the school, inside the school and all. (Ifunanya)

surviving one is known as an ogbanje. In general, ogbanjes are considered to be wicked, vengeful and malevolent people, as MissQ alluded to in her narration.

These experiences raises several critical concerns – whether the university authorities are aware of these scenarios; how the university ensures the physical health, care and wellbeing of all female students, and not just those that live on campus; whether there are any reporting processes to be followed for situations described above, and how these are communicated; if the students are aware of these processes; and the implications of such incidents for the mental health and wellbeing of the affected students. In my view, these prevailing contextual conditions also failed to achieve the wellbeing freedom that is an aspect of capabilities according to Sen (1999). Some of the above-mentioned concerns are addressed further in Chapter 6.

Another aspect that influences some of my research partners' physical wellbeing is their monthly menstrual cycle, particularly for MissQ, Akudo, Chimdi and Somadina. Below is an excerpt from one discussion:

> MissQ: Ehen, can we talk now about our monthly periods as girls?
>
> Somadina: Hmmm! Coming to my monthly cycle, oh my God, will I say that's a mountain I always pray to pass through because I DON'T go to school. If it happen *{sic}* before I go to school, maybe say I wake up early in the morning and notice it, I don't go to school for the day because I can't go. I can't just cope with it. But if I'm in school and it starts, I will just leave it and go because it's not possible, I can't cope with it. My own is a very, ha, very bad one so I can't do anything. …everybody's own are *{sic}* different. Like my sister now, and some of my friends too… she feels normal. While very few also find it very hard because they can't cope with it. I don't know why it's always like that. I heard something… I have to browse it - it was talking about cramps, something like that, that it's the gene. …But some of them do have it and it also affects their academics. But they can't do anything about it.
>
> MissQ: Yeah it affected me. I had 2 carry-over *{sic}* in my year 1. One is GS, the other one is Sociology. But had it been I knew that you can come and write the course as a fresh course that time, I wouldn't have written my name in the attendance.
>
> Somadina: I don't write exam during my own. It's either I take drug to stop the pain or I will not write the exam if it's during exam period. But if you have been preparing for this course and read so much for it, you can't afford to miss the exam.

The monthly periods therefore do not only affect their health and ability to attend to daily student activities, but it has a possible long-term impact on their academic studies. Both explained that they had to avoid missing certain examinations so as not to carry them over to

the following year, especially if that next year involved a period of Industrial Training or project work. This would have far-reaching consequences, including a delay in graduation. The feelings of worry and stress provoked as a result had a negative impact on their wellbeing. The discussion also covered the disposal of sanitary waste which will be covered in the next chapter as it pertains to environmental wellbeing.

5.3.3 Personal Safety

Apart from their physical and personal health, personal safety issues were also discussed in relation to wellbeing. Some of the research partners agree that the university has performed well to increase campus security and curb negative practices such as cultism, robbery and rape. For example, telephone helplines to the campus security services are published in each issue of the institution's monthly bulletin. These aspects have made a positive difference to their emotional and physical wellbeing, particularly for those who live in and/or study at the female hostels on campus.

> Yes, we hear of less incidents nowadays. The school has done well. (Akudo)

> There is also a high level of security against cultism so we feel safer now. (Patricia)

However, most students live off-campus in the adjoining Ivenso area, and thereby face more risks. MissQ recounted below one such experience of studying at the Gambo Arena (see Photos 5.1 to 5.3). The structure of the arena is open and airy; however, its location (also discussed in the next chapter), lighting and construction are unsuitable for students' concentration, study conditions and safety. These obstacles are particularly detrimental to women at night-time and during the rainy season.

> Actually when they first brought it here[41], I was afraid because it was in the night. I came there to study *[pointing across the road at a square]*. That place is Gambo Arena, where we attend mass. Most churches hold programmes there. Also SUG [Student Union Government] week. Some departments use it

[41] MissQ was referring to one of the sculptures at the Arts Department, which is located opposite Gambo Arena. She gives more insight into her experience with the sculptures in Appendix VII.

> for exams and lectures, and we also study there during exam period. But going back to my hostel at Ivenso in the night eh, *egwu n'atu kwa* [it is quite scary]! (MissQ)

Photos 5.1 to 5.3: Students studying at Gambo Arena

The safety of female students is also judged according to parental expectations. Nina for example, has two sisters and two brothers and remains bemused that her Mum treats them differently depending on their sex:

> Parents believe that girls should be protected. I think that's why our hostel is oversubscribed. It is safe and there is a strict curfew of 10pm. Unlike my brother's. He can stay off campus or change accommodation whenever he likes and mummy doesn't mind that… there are two reading rooms here so we can study at night safely.

For Prisca however, this arrangement presents a conflicting situation for her studies:

> I attend school from home but I plan on staying in the campus next semester because I don't really have enough time to read at home. My parents are not happy with my plan because my dad is the kind of person that believes that staying at home is safe.

Marian's preference is to study in one of the female hostels on campus during exam periods. She took me there during her campus walk and decided to take photos of the reading room (see Photo 5.4), explaining:

> Because I live in town, it is too far to start coming in the morning of my exam. So I sneak in the night before and read in this room. It is safe and quiet and cool because they have ceiling fans, but sometimes there is one smell that comes in through the window from outside. Maybe it's from the gutter outside. Then early in the morning I take my bath in my friend's room upstairs and go for my exam. (Marian)

> They really helped to stop many bad stories we used to hear about girls being raped on their way back from studying at night. If we didn't have these rooms, you won't even find me outside in the night. (Gloria)

Photo 5.4: Reading room in one female hostel

From these accounts, the health and safety of female undergraduate students has an implicit bearing on their wellbeing capabilities and for gender justice. Female students do not have the capability to preserve their bodily integrity because they are not safe from violent or sexual assaults whether on or off campus (more on this in Section 5.4.2 on *Bullying and Harassment*). According to Loots and Walker (2015), the capability for bodily integrity and safety, which includes 'having freedom of movement and expression of self on campus' (pp. 366-367), is a core capability for gender equality and should therefore be taken seriously by university authorities to inform gender policies. This issue is also revisited in Chapter 6 on *Place and Space*.

5.4 Being Female

From the introduction of this thesis, a discussion on gender issues was detailed as a foundation for this study. This section therefore addresses the ways in which some contextual gender biases, stereotypes and expectations have an impact on the research partners' wellbeing. The section is divided into four parts: gender biases and expectations; bullying and harassment; culture of fear; and lack of personal agency.

5.4.1 Gender Biases and Expectations

> I couldn't believe my ears when Mr. Isionwu [a lecturer] said this today at the orientation session. Advising the students about boosting their grades by getting an A during their teaching practice:
>
> 'If you are a woman and you get third class, your husband will be making mockery of you until the marriage ends.'
>
> Wait, what?! REALLY???
>
> (Reflections, April 2017)

This and other similar statements indicate some institutional bias against the female students as well as the wider structural and socio-cultural expectations of women and girls in Nigerian society. Unfortunately, they also reinforce gender stereotypes of appropriate behaviours from

women (Alade, 2012) and imply that there are different expectations from female students than their male counterparts. The statement above denotes the patriarchal view of hierarchy in the home, as problematised in Makama's (2013) article on patriarchy and gender inequality. He observed that 'the establishment and practice of male dominance over women and children, is a historic process formed by men and women, with the patriarchal family serving as a basic unit of organization' (p. 117).

This was confirmed by a female academic member of staff who, during her interview, assumed that the statement above was made by a female student, and expressed:

> I am happy that somebody said that if you're a woman and you get third class, your husband will be making mockery of you until the marriage ends. In fact, I love that. That is the spirit of a girl who knows where she's going, who knows she should not make a third class. Afterall the university is meant for the above average. Anybody who comes here should aim for at least a second class. And if you have to hold your head up in your home, you've got to show it in the university result you get. And the way to do it is to tell yourself ab initio that you're not running into any man's house to hide and just answer a wife. You're going in there to contribute, to put your knowledge to test, use your skills to build the house. (Dr. Regina Okorie)

On the surface, this seems to be a positive admonition to female students; however, I interpreted it as an emphasis of the negative stereotyping of women, and its effect on their wellbeing.

Similarly, the disparity in expectations was revealed through another naturally occurring event as evidenced below, during an interaction with Edwin, the only male student in the study:

> As the TPO session had not started at the scheduled time of 11am, we decided to go to Paschal's Place for a late breakfast. On our way there, we spotted a female student urinating in a corner by a wall of a building. I asked Edwin if there are no toilets around here. He replied that there are. I must have wondered aloud why she didn't ask to use one because Edwin then said, 'because she doesn't have any home training'. Well, that surprised me so I asked him what if it was a male student? His response was 'Why not? They're allowed nah!'
>
> (Fieldnotes, April 2017)

Therefore, one prevailing contextual reason for the unequal gender expectations is that men can and do get away with certain types of behaviour, but women cannot. Additionally, I considered both Mr. Isionwu's veiled encouragement and Edwin's comment about the female student's lack of 'home training' as insulting and verbally attacking on women. This is discussed further in the section on bullying and harassment below, as well as in Chapter 6 regarding staff attitudes.

Dressing

Another aspect of gender bias in relation to unequal expectations of female students also discussed by my research partners was that of female dressing. During the discussion of vignettes, the following statement uttered by a male lecturer at the TPO session was presented to the group from my fieldnotes: 'You better dress smartly. If you put on mini-skirt here, make sure that your laps are attractive' (Reflections, April 2017).

In the discussion that ensued (see transcript in Appendix V), various opinions and examples were shared. These range from commending the University for working hard to ensure 'females proper dressing' whilst acknowledging that some still dress indecently (Nneoma) to indicting the girls who remain intent on 'dodging the security, they just sneak through the other side' (Ifunanya). Furthermore, 'the school is really trying but the students are causing it [indecent dressing]' (Marian). From these statements, I surmised that those female students were considered as naughty or rebellious. As for Gloria, the only thing she likes about the University is that 'you can't dress anyhow into the school premises'. I reflected from these responses that my research partners were less concerned by the lecturer's words and their implications and more focussed on the process and outcomes of the University's move to curb indecent dressing by female students. The consensus was that the University is performing well in this regard, but I inferred that this was also an indication of my research partners' personal moral values of decency. I also considered from my outsider perspective, that my research partners may be unable to recognise some gender biases and discriminatory situations due to their own familiarity with the context (Mannay, 2010). According to Mama (2011), 'when we are conducting research in our local contexts, we are situated with epistemic advantages, as well as challenges and demands' (p. 14). As insiders, my research partners seem to be either accustomed or resigned to the contextual constraints placed on women and the ways in which

they are viewed by and treated in society (see also the discussion on adaptive preferences in Chapters 2, 6 and 7); most of which stem from the patriarchal demands and the challenges of continuing coloniality of *power* and of *being*. We will address further in the sections to follow that even if there is any such awareness of the discriminatory experiences, female students are either reluctant or seem unable to exercise their agency to change the situation.

Wahab's (2018) report from another tertiary institution in the South-West of Nigeria that 'the Polytechnic Rector warns that no student should wear [skimpy] skirts that expose their thighs or blouses that show their chests' (para. 2), indicates that this may be a problem that is more widespread than my case study. On the other hand, I understood that in some cases, the intention was to look smart, for example when Nina explained that in her Law department uniforms are worn:

> I think it gives more respect than mufti[42]. Ours is white or black collar shirt, black shoes and bag, and knee length skirt. Girls are not allowed to wear trousers.

However, I would argue that the processes and attitudes from the regulation have led to female students being exposed to power imbalances, sarcastic comments and even verbal abuse from staff. This was typified by the notice in Photo 5.5, posted on the wall in the reception area of the university's main library.

[42] Mufti is defined as 'ordinary clothes worn by people who usually wear uniforms, especially soldiers' (Cambridge University Press, 2018 para. 1). I was not sure if Nina's choice of the word 'mufti' was from natural parlance or if it had any reference to the order and control that uniforms are typically used for, for example, with children in schools.

Photo 5.5: Sign in lobby area of UniSEN main library

The choice of the word *dresses* struck me as a particularly gendered reference to women because in most Nigerian cultures, it is seen as a religious and cultural taboo for men to wear clothes made for the female sex.

Further to my observation above about the regulations and expectations of dressing leading to exploitative and discriminatory comments towards female students, the following is an example of another naturally-occurring incident of verbal harassment during one fieldwork visit. I was sitting in the lobby area of the campus library conducting an observation and informal interview with a male member of the security staff, Mr. Linus Omana (LO), and we discussed the instructions on the sign about the library's prohibited items, according to the notice in Photo 5.5.

As we were talking, LO stopped a 300L female student from entering the library. He asked where she was going and she replied that this is her second visit for registration. She was wearing a pair of jeans which were 'torn' at the thighs and knees.

LO: How on earth... look at your laps... how on earth can you, a lady, wear this type of thing?? So you enter market to buy this? Is it for everybody's

eyes? Only one person should see this *[I wonder who he is referring to here - her boyfriend/husband, I guess]*.

Student: My shirt covers it, I even had to stitch it sef.

LO: No! Come back tomorrow.

Student *[begging]*: Please nowww?!

[Another female student walks in wearing a pair of jeans also ripped at the knees. I groan inwardly, dreading what is to come next.]

LO *[turning to second student]*: See you now? Dis ya tear tear trouser that you are wearing. Is it in vogue now? Rubbish! Your dressing portrays who you are.

[He turns to me]: This is what we were just talking about.
Student 2: Today is my final exam.

LO *[sarcastically]*: So why didn't you wear pant...since you are now a graduate?

[He allows the second student to enter the library and turns back to the first student] What does your guy or male friend say about this? If he sees this one now, does he like it? Wear this one at home, not outside. Oya, go in. No excuses next time! This grace will not be available again.

(Fieldnotes, October 2016)

From this exchange, it was clear to me that whilst LO endeavoured to enforce the rules on indecent dressing, it confirmed Odejide's (2007) conclusion that such treatment results in the 'infantilisation and control of women' (p. 51). It also reveals the underlying cultural assumption that a female student's morality is expressed through her dressing. Likewise, the TPO lecturer's warning that a girl wearing a mini-skirt should 'make sure your laps are attractive' indicates that 'women's sexuality is constructed as "seductive" and perceived as threatening to men's superior status' (ibid, p. 43)

5.4.2 Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are represented in two ways – through verbal abuse and threats, and through sexism, sexual victimisation or sexual harassment. According to Anele (2010), 'sexism

refers to unfair and unwarranted discrimination of people based on the biological phenomenon of sex. As it is obvious, sexism is decipherable in both the individual and institutional spheres' (p. 67). Most incidents of verbal assault directed at the research partners were from male lecturers. The following experiences were shared as examples:

> Prisca: It was during Mr K's lecture and we were doing class presentations. His class is boring so people usually talk and make noise. On this day, a boy and girl were talking. He brought them to the front of the class and first asked the girl if she was a virgin. She didn't answer, just stood there smiling, then she replied, 'I can't say oh, when you verify you will know'. He then turned to the boy and asked him, 'Can you take care of this girl if you get her pregnant?'
>
> MissQ: Imagine?! To me, he was not asking legitimate questions. Why and what does this have to do with what he is supposed to be teaching us?
>
> Prisca: *I tire oh!* [it is ridiculous to me]…When I asked that our classmate later why she was smiling, she told me that she was just so shocked and embarrassed.

Also,

> Our departmental lecturers are really annoying. We have one very abusive man. He calls us 'stupid, fool, carton-head girls and boys'. He tells us that 'you will fail my course plus the next 4 years before you graduate.' It's very demoralising. I am afraid of him. (Marian)

It is inevitable from the students' perspectives that such abuse and insults would create a culture of fear for students in the department or the overall institution, as we will discuss in the next section.

I observed a similar naturally-occurring incident during the TPO session:

> Before he [Dr. Inoma, a lecturer] could introduce the third speaker, the noise levels had risen again. I'm not surprised because it is not a conducive lecture hall and with so many students, it's too crowded for the space available. He again tried to quieten the students but to no avail. I could see that he was getting angry. He singled out a female student who was sitting at the front of the hall and told her to stand up. Then he started shouting – 'Look at her! TEACHER. How can you be in front of me and still be talking when I am talking? You have noise inside you and that noise will continue even when you are teaching. Oya, what was I saying? Answer me now. *[He paused for a minute, staring at her angrily]* Go and sit down. Foolish girl!'
>
> (Fieldnotes, April 2017)

These distinct examples of verbal insults and harassment indicate a worrying trend of singling out female students to ridicule them. As will also be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, gender justice measures are necessary to combat such staff attitudes that constitute all forms of sexism.

Sexism and Sexual Harassment

According to Anele (2010), institutionalised sexism in the Nigerian university system stems from the same culture and ideology of patriarchy that impacts on the treatment of women in general. He opined that:

> research attention has been completely taken away from the invidiousness of patriarchy in the university system generally regarded as a citadel of learning, centre of excellence, and purveyor of modern civilisation. (p. 65).

The following conversation about MissQ's final year project work is an example of institutionalised sexism, including own-gender discrimination (this is further discussed in Chapter 6), compared to the way male students are addressed and treated:

> MissQ: *I don tire oh!* [I feel so weary] I've been at the Admin Block since 8.30 to distribute my questionnaires, only one person accepted it and it's a guy. The others are females, they don't even want to hear me out let alone take the questionnaire…
>
> Zibah: Who are these questionnaires for?
>
> MissQ: My participants are non-academic staff. And it's the questionnaires I'll use to run my analysis which is chapter four.
>
> Zibah: And how many people have you approached so far?
>
> MissQ: Like 10 persons so far but their countenance have *{sic}* discouraged me. But I met Prisca's brother and he said I should wait for him that he'll help me.
>
> Zibah: Does he work at the Admin Block too?
>
> MissQ: No. Prisca's brother is a CEP student. He said I should wait that he'll help me distribute it.
>
> Zibah: Okay. It's good of him to help.
>
> MissQ: Yeah he just collected it. He said if he gives it to them by himself it will make it faster. Then he even shared it to the same people and they collected it!! Imagine?

(WhatsApp Chat, August 2017)

In his academic blog piece on students in vulnerable and exploitable situations, Hayton (2016) reflects on the 'cases of verbal, psychological and sexual abuse that occur in all institutions where there is a dysfunctional power dynamic' (para. 2). I also partly agree with his submission that the prevalence of such abuse by someone in a position of power, in this case male lecturers over female students, is 'because they can exploit students' fear' (ibid). I would further argue that they continue to abuse victims because there are no obvious repercussions on them, particularly as the students either do not acknowledge the abuse or feel scared to report their experiences, as discussed in the next section on *A Culture of Fear*. Regardless of the reasons, female students' wellbeing is affected through the stripping away of their dignity and self-esteem, leaving them with feelings of shock, anger, embarrassment and helplessness.

'When you want to pass the course, lie low'

My research partners cited several instances of their experiences of sexual harassment. During the ASUU strike, MissQ shared her conflicting thoughts about a safe and suitable meeting venue with her supervisor to discuss her project:

> The thing is eh, if I don't go, *na me go suffer am* [I will suffer because of it] … because only God knows when these ASUU people will come back to work. Then my project will not be ready. …My friend and other supervisees do meet with their supervisor at Sweeters[43] or any other eatery in town. One said she had to go to the man's house. But she said she was lucky. That after few minutes when she got there, the man's wife and kids just came back. I told her she's lucky that the man is married, my own supervisor is still a bachelor and nothing will save me if he asks me to do likewise. Me, I call my fellow supervisees oh, I can't afford to go alone.

Sexual harassment was also discussed extensively by my research partners in the vignettes group (see transcript in Appendix VI), albeit with mixed opinions. They gave examples of harassment cases by lecturers and debated whether it is the lecturers or the female students that should have greater self-control, with Nneoma directing a warning to female students: 'When you want to pass the course, lie low'.

[43] Sweeters is a popular eatery located in the Bonny area of Ajuba town.

Ofole and Agokei (2016) use the similar term of sexual victimization to include 'rape, forced vaginal, anal or oral penetration, forced sexual intercourse, inappropriate touching, forced kissing, …or the torture of the victim in a sexual manner' (p. 264). In relation to this study, young women in HE are three times more likely to experience sexual harassment than those of the same age in the wider populace (Ofole, 2016).

As explored in Section 3.2.2, the issue of female sexual harassment by male staff and students in Nigerian tertiary institutions is well documented; however, it remains a taboo subject (Okeke, 2011). As a result, most cases are unreported and therefore the effects of sexual harassment on the wellbeing of the victims are largely still not addressed. According to the World Health Organization (WHO; 2012), victims do not report cases due to feelings of shame, fears of not being believed, receiving blame, stigmatisation, retaliation, bullying and maltreatment, or social exclusion. In addition to the negative impact on their wellbeing, female students risk contracting diseases and experiencing other health problems due to ignorance or carelessness.

The perpetrators of sexual harassment are also not sanctioned appropriately by the institutions concerned. During the period of this research study, the Nigerian national press printed two related pieces of news from different universities. The first was an allegation by a Vice Chancellor (VC) that over 40% of staff spend more time watching pornographic and other illicit films during office hours than on their work (Okafor, 2017). This was subsequently refuted by the same VC. The second was an audio recording by a female student accusing her lecturer of demanding sex for grades (Sahara Reporters, 2018). The sex-for-grades phenomenon is not new, nor is it exclusive to Nigeria. Research studies on gender violence and power in African HEIs have been conducted in Ghana and Tanzania (Morley, 2011), Kenya (Omale, 2002; Ligami, 2017), Malawi (Kayuni, 2009), South Africa (Similane, 2001) and Zimbabwe (Zindi, 1998). However, in Nigeria a bill has recently been passed into law to prohibit and punish lecturers who sexually harass students (Itodo, 2016). For the first time at institutional level, the lecturer mentioned earlier was also dismissed (Ogunbodede, 2018).

When we discussed the above-mentioned situations, my research partners were unconvinced that there will be any changes in power dynamics at UniSEN. As Celine expressed, '*Na today* [this is not news to me]? It will continue to happen *jare* [of course]!' Unfortunately, this continues to be the case as depicted in a recent documentary titled 'Sex for grades: undercover

inside Nigerian and Ghanaian universities' (BBC News Africa, 2019). The documentary was described thus:

> Universities in Nigeria and Ghana have been plagued by stories of sexual harassment by lecturers and professors for decades. Allegations include a wide array of abuses, from blackmailing students for sex in exchange for marks and admission to lewd comments and grooming. (para. 1)

The BBC Africa Eye programme proceeded to gather a great deal of numerous evidence and undercover film recordings which document the sexual harassment at two universities in said countries, thereby substantiating Celine's claim about ongoing incidences of sexual harassment.

Furthermore, my research partners were also nonchalant about the idea of lecturers watching pornography at work; neither did they critically relate the activity to their own physical and mental wellbeing as students. According to Zarra (2016), there is a correlation between teachers exposed to addictions such as pornography and inappropriate or predatory behaviours towards students. Inevitably, they lead to unprofessional teacher-student relationships.

'We girls are suffering oh!'

Although I found my research partners' nonchalant responses disappointing, this was one of many reflexive opportunities for me to acknowledge that in a critical participatory study, *their* feelings, expressions and voices are sought, therefore it is essential to check my own perspective, privilege and positionality as an outsider to UniSEN who is not exposed to such levels of victimisation and disadvantage in my own academic life. I would argue that there is currently a lack of support systems in place to address the impact of verbal or physical harassment on their wellbeing. This became obvious as we discussed the role of the University's Guidance and Counselling (G&C) or Student Affairs departments regarding the students' welfare issues. According to Kelechi:

> We girls are suffering oh! So, there are those that do what they are not supposed to by becoming "runs"[44] girls. Maybe because of low self-esteem, peer pressure, unstable family, like money too much, hanging around with big guys, and our guidance and counselling here is non-existent. So, we just advise

[44] 'Runs girls' is a slang for girls that are involved in prostitution.

> ourselves. *Nke anyi g'eme nwu, anyi emee* [We just do whatever we can for ourselves].

The University's Information Handbook lists the Student Affairs department's responsibilities as accommodation, transportation, students' discipline, health and welfare, students' organisations, Student Union Government (SUG), national youth service mobilisation, religious services, banks on campus and catering services. The psychological and counselling services are intended to provide mental and emotional health services, appropriate referrals from the medical centre, and 'regular prophylactic service such as stress inoculation programme, psycho-education and liaison services with agencies outside the university' (UniSEN, 2016 p. 120). From my research partners' experiences, however, these professional services are sorely lacking (see Kelechi's narrative above). This issue is described in subsequent chapters as a systemic failure of the university and wider societal context.

'OWU is in the air'

Kelechi's last sentence is indicative of the helplessness felt by female students who, due to this inadequate provision of wellbeing and counselling advice, may resort to other means of making money, including sex work and prostitution. The issue of turning to sex work invoked mixed reactions from my research partners. In the vignettes group, some female students were blamed for using their bodies to attract favours and good grades from lecturers:

> Nneoma: And actually, we female students, we contribute.
>
> Ifunanya: Yeah!
>
> Nneoma: If you're a fine girl, you're a beautiful girl, you have it all, you have the boobs, you have everything, and you even have the brains – the 3 Bs.
>
> Zibah: What are the 3 Bs? Boobs, brain and…?
>
> Marian: Butt? *{everyone laughs}*

> Nneoma: Boobs, brain and beauty. Or that's body, brain, beauty …So, when they notice you? God, you're in trouble! So, what you do when you're a fine girl? I'll tell you basically from experience because I'm one and I'm still hiding under cover. But sha everybody has self-control but I'd say it comes greater from the lecturers.

Other research partners counteracted Nneoma's opinion but agreed with her last statement, indicting the lecturers for pushing female students into acts such as prostitution. However, they insisted that girls still have a choice in the type of work they do to earn an income. Some research partners chose to use their learnt skills for gainful employment:

> Sometimes it's not just the girls oh! Male lecturers harass us a lot. Some lecturers will tell girls to pay for a hotel outside the campus, to 'sort'[45] them. And trust some girls now, we too can be lazy and then try and influence each other. Like my friend will always tell me, '*Obi gu ka i neme* [you are punishing your heart/self], you don't know anything. Stay there. No money. Hunger go finish you.' Then my neighbour in the hostel was raped by a fellow student. She confided in me but she was afraid to speak out because of embarrassment. We girls generally don't voice our opinions and ideas. (Gloria)

> The prices of foodstuffs in the market... we girls feel it a lot. The male students can just go and do any job for money. On the side of the females, it tremendously disturbs our study time. We complain that our allowances have reduced and these have lead *{sic}* female students exposure to molestation… and making them involve in activities not worthy like prostitution just because they need to live up to standard. As for me sha, I really have to work to survive. I take care of myself, from feeding, to rent, to school fee. Although the business I did while studying I stopped already, and I closed my tutorial classes too. I have to move ahead… because my parents are not buoyant to train me and I really needed to study. (Chimdi)

> OWU [no cash] is in the air. I really need money. I have told my friends to help me get a job in places like supermarket, bar, eatery, hotel. I can work as a receptionist or accountant. That's the only option here in Ajuba oh! But I pray I get it, preferably supermarket. Eatery, I would prefer their kitchen… (MissQ)

These narratives also indicate that some female students experience poor economic wellbeing and have limited opportunities to use their skills and capabilities to obtain good employment. Although they have the capability of engaging with the university authorities, female students do not have the enabling conditions in which to do so, as we will discuss in the section to follow.

[45] 'Sort' is a slang used to depict academic corruption or bribery. Sorting is defined as 'a process by which students pay in cash or kind to be awarded unmerited marks by lecturers after examination or test' (Chukwu and Lato, 2016 p. 3).

5.4.3 A Culture of Fear

One of the issues raised by my research partners was their fear of speaking up when negative incidents occur:

> We want to do things right and speak out, but we are scared. Like when you stand up, other people will go back. Most people are afraid. Once you want to come out, maybe you are in a group of people and you're talking about it, and they agree with you it's right, when you stand up to go and say, they'll go back. It will be only on your head.' (Gloria)

> Anything you don't like, you might be afraid of speaking and they will identify you like you… you… you… why, why, why… But now, at times you find out that our fear as course reps, you might want to do that. You'll be considering 'is it now I will come and do oversabi now and the lecturer will come and hold me down. (Ifunanya)

> So, when you speak out, the problem is when you don't really know people, maybe the person is not the right source to report this thing to. And you'll be afraid if you report to HoD. Sometimes you might even report it to the Dean, the Dean will not do anything. So, you'll know the right people that you will report this thing to so that they'll tackle it, they'll get it then they'll maybe punish the person. (Marian)

> Just avoid lecturers because they 'mark' you. (Kelechi)

As my research partners recounted their disabling experiences in dealing with problems when they arise, I realised that despite the university's rhetoric of freedoms and rights for students (UniSEN Handbook, 2016), there exists an underlying institutional culture of fear. The students are afraid of those in and with power, including lecturers and the university authorities. They fear being labelled a trouble-maker, 'marked' for punishment – sometimes in the form of withholding good grades or final year results, and even expelled from their degree programme for opposing authority, as in the case of one SUG President (see Section 6.4 on *Student Activism*). Furthermore, as mentioned by Gloria above, the reluctance to speak out is exacerbated by other students who are unwilling to participate in collective action to improve their situation.

In Chapter 3, Alabi et al (2014) posit that the female child in African culture and tradition is seen as inferior to the male child. From her own study on being women in a Nigerian university, Odejide (2007) points out the correlation between the gendered hierarchy promoted in

patriarchal societies and some experiences of female students. As seen in the UniSEN context, this hierarchy emphasised their inferior status and prevented them from speaking out:

> There was one time I had an issue with one of my classmates, in fact he's our course rep. My friends advised me to take it up direct with the lecturer. Can you believe what the course rep told me? That 'you are a nobody, so who will even believe you?' It upset me so much. After that, I kept to myself. …Yes oh, IM [ima madu][46] is alive and well here. (Patricia)

Therefore, not only is this culture of fear detrimental to the wellbeing of the female students, it also curtails their personal and collective agency, voice and power, hence the need for gender equity and justice within the UniSEN context.

5.4.4 Lack of Personal Agency

In relation to their health and safety, as well as the areas discussed in preceding sections under *Being Female*, I ascertained that my research partners seriously lacked opportunities to exercise their personal agency. For example, final year students do not have autonomy in the choice and direction of their project topics:

> So from these experiences[47], I discussed with my supervisor. I want to know why these staff act like that. My rough project topic is 'Conscientiousness and paranoid ideation as a predictor of verbal abuse among non-academic staff'. Although before I got this topic, I've been going back and forth with my supervisor. The other one I wanted to study, my supervisor asked me to bring the scale and then said there is not enough information on this. (MissQ)

> My supervisor have *{sic}* not accepted any topic yet. But I want to do something on leadership style or motivation. And because he's an industrial organizational psychologist, so I have to do something in relation to his field. (Prisca)

> Mine is 'Role of ICT on Effective Learning Process' …I was directed on the area of topic, my supervisor wanted me to write on ICT related topic. Hmmm… I was somehow happy with the topic, because ICT is an outmost *{sic}* demand for every individual existing... Here in Nigeria, students have limited access to this equipment, which in a way has drew *{sic}* back mostly their intellectual

[46] *'Ima madu (IM)'* is an Igbo phrase which translates as *'knowing people (of importance)'* (Jimanze, 2017 p. 69). In Patricia's case, it means that the course rep and lecturer (both male) have a relationship which accentuates the power and privilege of male dominance.

[47] See section 6.3.3 in *Attitudes of Non-academic Staff* where MissQ narrated one of the such experiences.

> quotient. But if I had my own way oh, I think I will choose another or better topic for myself. (Chimdi)

The following excerpt from my reflection journal was written following an informal chat with MissQ and Prisca:

> Now I am asking myself more questions. PERSONAL AGENCY. What does it look like? To me, it is about what I can or cannot do. It is about me and my life. It is about how much control or power I have over my own affairs and how I choose what to do with it. In any given situation, it is about my choices. What are they? Have I thought them through? Who is involved/affected? What are the consequences – positive and negative? How long do I have to decide? Who do I need to liaise with to clarify the issues and my thoughts? What does it mean for my life immediately and down the line, say in a year or two years' time, or even 5 years? What tools do I need to make this happen, if I want it to happen? How will it benefit or hinder me and/or others involved? What if I decide not to do it, will I have any regrets?
>
> Comparing these to what MissQ and Prisca shared, and now feeling sad, hopeless, helpless. One question remains - how much personal agency do they have and how much are they even able to use it?
>
> (Reflections, April 2017)

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) theorised individuals as agents who are free and able to take balanced decisions for themselves and their social world. They further developed this definition by citing Locke (1978), who positioned agency as an 'individual experience… [that enables] human beings to shape the circumstances in which they live' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998 pp. 964-965). Combining these two definitions, my research partners may have the ability to make decisions; for example, Chimdi's lack of freedom and agency in choosing her project topic but she was unable to shape her own circumstances, having instead to comply with her supervisor's wishes. Likewise, other female students were unable to pursue their valued goals such as participating in any level of the decision-making process about their university education or personal wellbeing because they had not been given the substantial freedoms or opportunities to do so (Robeyns, 2011), in accordance with the CA. These narratives also exemplify issues of coloniality of *being* (referred to in Chapter 2 and discussed further in Chapter 8) and highlight some of the areas in which decolonising power and mindsets is necessary for the female students' practice of freedom over their academic and personal lives.

In the 2012 World Development Report, the assertion is made that 'Across all countries and cultures, there are differences between men's and women's ability to make these choices, usually to women's disadvantage. These gendered differences matter for women's well-being' (The World Bank, 2011 p. 6). The differences matter because without freedom, women have no agency. The World Bank confirmed this in stating the link between a lack of agency and domestic violence. In the context of this study, sexual violence and discrimination denies female students their agency, devalues their capabilities and negatively impacts their wellbeing.

Furthermore, the CA allows us here to reflect on a distinction made by Nussbaum (2000) between combined capabilities and internal capabilities. Nussbaum's definition of internal capabilities is the 'characteristics, personality traits, intellectual and emotional capacities, states of bodily fitness and health, internalized learning, skills of perception and movement' (p. 21). Kelechi's internal learned habit of thinking, reflection and self-awareness, forms part of her combined capabilities. Similarly, MissQ's accounting skills are likely to gain her employment should a suitable opportunity arise but, given the inequitably gendered nature of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects and careers in Nigeria (Akinsowon and Osisanwo, 2014), those skills may be inadequate. This would subsequently result in gender inequalities that further thwart her combined capabilities.

That said, I also reflected on whose responsibility it is to provide agency – was it the female students themselves or the university authorities? If, for instance, there were opportunities to exercise their full personal agency, would the female students take them up? I argue that most of them, intentionally or not, will not be able to do so. This stems from my contextual observations as well as from Odejide's (2007) views from her study on being women in a Nigerian university:

> The statements of many of the women students in this study denote a disturbing level of resignation to an unequal social status, and a reluctance to exert some degree of agency to empower themselves in either secular and religious contexts. (p. 54)

In light of the preceding findings, Chapter 7 will therefore attempt to problematise the concepts of the subjective versus personal wellbeing within the context of this study, and to

further discuss the influence of socio-cultural and economic aspects on female undergraduate students' wellbeing capabilities, in a bid to make knowledge claims.

Summary

In this chapter, I ascertained various critical areas in which my research partners experience wellbeing and how it is affected – through their feelings and emotions, religion and spirituality, health and safety and by being a woman. References were made to the enhancement of wellbeing through the capabilities of the students.

The chapter answered the first research question of this study by depicting wellbeing experiences in the following areas:

Personal – feelings and emotions, religion and spirituality, health and safety, lack of personal agency.

Socio-Cultural – gender biases and expectations, bullying and harassment, a culture of fear.

Economic – part of being female for example, high cost of living, prostitution.

The next chapter answers the second research question by investigating any contextual issues and factors that have an impact on my research partners' capabilities for wellbeing.

-6- Influences on Wellbeing

Setting the Scene

Whilst Chapter 5 covered my research partners' own perceptions and experiences of their wellbeing, this chapter attempts to answer the second research question (RQ): *What are the wider contextual influences on the wellbeing of the research participants?* It also builds on the previous chapter by revealing the degree of powerlessness experienced by female students, their passiveness due to contextual conditioning, and their lack of voice.

In terms of university welfare services in this chapter, I adopt Mahadi's (2007) definition as,

> the basic needs provided to students by the university for ensuring survival, comfort and conducive atmosphere for academic concentration and better performance [including] good feeding, decent accommodation, sports and recreational facilities, guidance and counselling, health and other social amenities, sound academic activities i.e. teaching and learning facilities... (p. 48)

The sections address issues around the materiality of place and space, the availability of services and facilities for students, academic provision through teaching and learning, communication with staff and the university authorities and student politics and activism. In each section, the intersections between my research partners' wellbeing, capabilities and/or gender justice are highlighted.

6.1 Place and Space

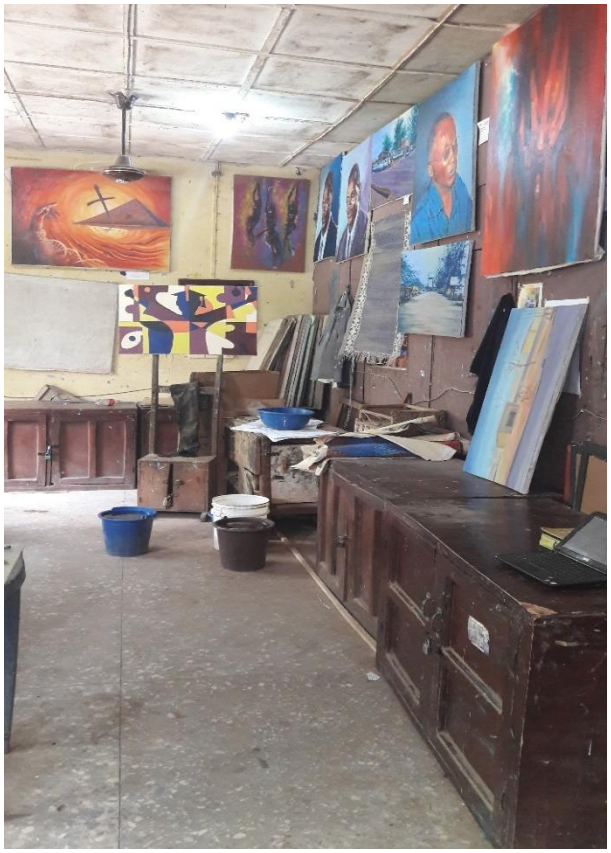
For all the research partners, the places and spaces they frequent and occupy within and outside of UniSEN play a large role in ensuring or detracting from their wellbeing. In describing these areas, they narrated the reasons why they attached meanings to them. The main methods used to elicit these interactions were the campus walks with MissQ, Ije and Marian, and the group participatory mapping session. For both methods, two main questions were asked of the research partners:

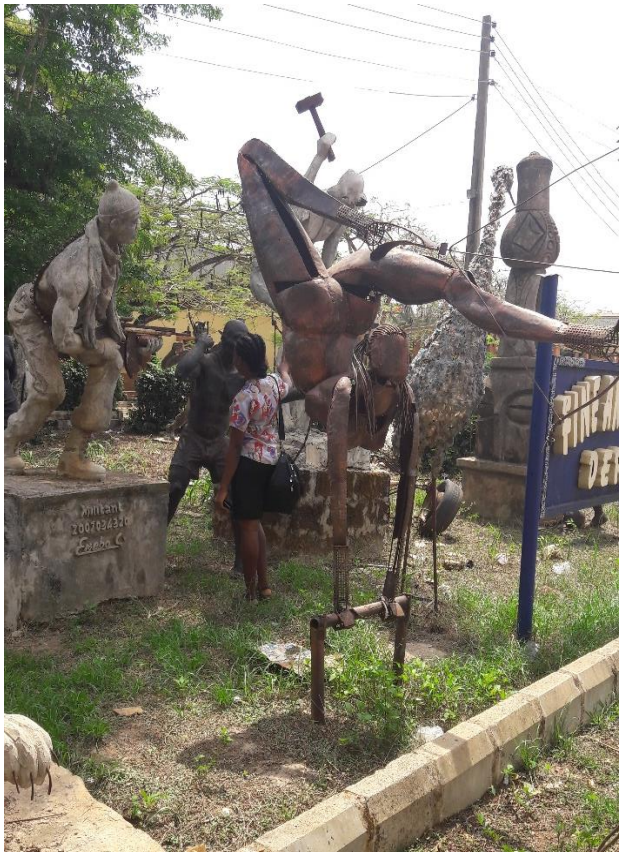
1. *Which areas do you go to that make you happy, well or comfortable?*

2. *From your overall experiences as a 'female undergraduate student', who, what or where in the university has been a threat to you, or made you feel upset, bad, ill or sad?*

Most of the answers to the first question referred to the aesthetics, atmosphere and social interactions in the environment, as well as the research partners' comfort zones. According to Casey (1996), places gather both animate and inanimate things, histories, experiences, even languages and thoughts. The Arts Department is one place that encapsulates this idea and seems to be a popular choice as MissQ revealed during her campus walk (see transcript from my fieldnotes attached as Appendix VII), 'Each time I'm bored or sad or if sometimes I come for lectures and it's not going well, I come here and feel happy'. For Marian, 'I snap pics there with the arts mouldings and post on Facebook. I pretend that I'm in London'. Celine agreed:

> I also like that Fine and Applied Arts Department; I would have studied it but wonder how I can spend four years of my life painting and sculpting? *[laughs]* But I spend hours there. I enjoy it and the interaction, asking students questions and they answer.





Photos 6.1 and 6.2: Paintings and mouldings at the Arts Department

The other social spaces that Marian enjoys visiting are the market, banks and Gambo Arena, for various reasons:

> I see a lot of fascinating things even when I have no money to buy them. Wishful thinking. I like the noise from marketers, it gives me life. I meet students and friends. Also, the products have cheaper rates than other places like supermarkets. I also go to the banks to take selfies at the ATM gallery. I enjoy their AC, shade from the sun and chilled water. That Gambo Arena too is an interesting place. A lot happens there – churches, events, artistes like Frank Edward. I go there to sing and dance and it gives me joy. My Catholic Church that I attend is there.

Celine identified the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) as a place where she could expand her social interests:

> I like FSS because the original location of Mass Comm. department is too far from the mother faculty where it's happening[48]. FSS is close to school gate so I prefer it. I am the first Director of Socials and was inspired by some mates and friends there; people I admire and they admire me. We spend time after lectures gisting at Cheers Spot, we meet and greet, hang out, encourage each other.

These descriptions of objects and symbols in certain places and spaces relate to their importance in the constitution of female students' wellbeing within the HEI context. Previous scholars also emphasise this relationship between spaces and materiality. Meanings are drawn from such materiality (Aagaard and Matthiesen, 2015), not only from artefacts or objects in this study, but also from the places frequented (or not) by female students and the spaces they occupy. The role of materiality also supports my decision to use campus walks and participant observations as data collection methods. In relation to wellbeing, White (2015) acknowledges the importance of place as a dimension of materiality, in stating that 'place also draws attention to the interconnections between the environment and human wellbeing…' (p. 7). Culture, assets, welfare and standards of living also form part of the material dimension of White's (2010) subjective wellbeing, highlighting that the participants' narratives of enjoying these spaces also relate to the human/subjective and social dimensions.

[48] *'…where it's happening'* is a slang which indicates a place or space that is always full of activities.

Likewise, Marian's account above of the 'joy' that she gains from spaces such as markets, banks and Gambo Arena, confirms Atkinson's (2013) argument that spatial and social environments inform an individual's wellbeing depending on how contextual resources are mobilised. In her view, wellbeing is constituted by the relationality not only 'between people, but also between people and places, material objects and less material constituents of places including atmosphere, histories and values' (p. 142).

My research partners appreciated the images, sculptures and mouldings at the Arts department, using their 'senses, imagination and thought… experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth' (Nussbaum, 2000 p. 33). Likewise, Celine's capabilities for affiliation and control over her environment are enhanced whenever she visits the FSS. Her social interactions in that space show 'how performed [materiality] contributes to defining a man or a woman in a given society' (Naji and Douny, 2009 p. 416).

In line with this, some other areas of place and space deemed by my research partners as important to their wellbeing – such as campus infrastructure, student accommodation and amenities, and accessible roads and transportation – are discussed below.

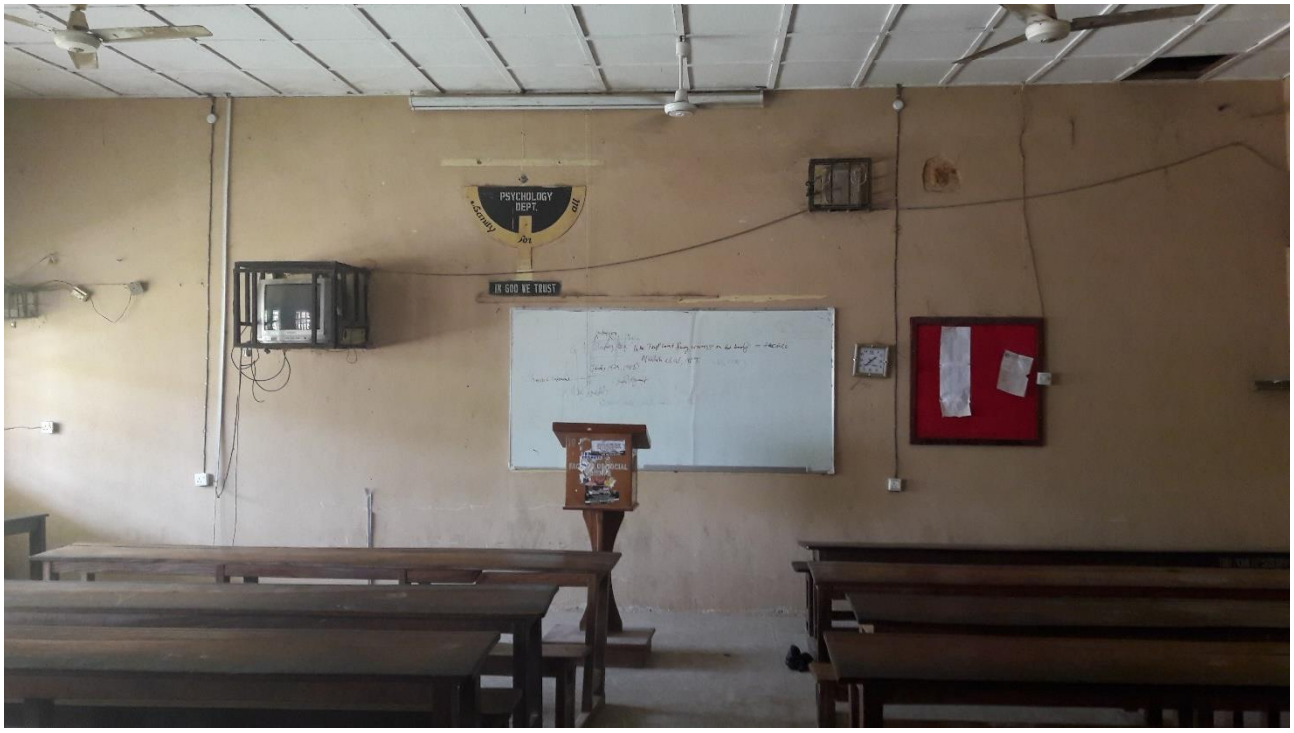
6.1.1 Campus Infrastructure

This section covers lecture halls, classrooms and laboratories. These were not regarded by my research partners as fit-for-purpose.

> MissQ: Okay let's even think about our classes, it's so annoying. No fan…
>
> Dumebi: Yesss, sweat sweat sweat!!
>
> MissQ: …everywhere is just so stuffed up, sometimes you might even be feeling sick. Plus that DJ Dan that'll keep playing music…
>
> Celine: …when you're trying to concentrate.
>
> MissQ: I tell you!
>
> (Participatory Mapping Session, April 2017)

The following excerpt from my observations and fieldnotes, and subsequent photographs (6.3 to 6.6) taken by MissQ, also depict the poor conditions of the classrooms.

> We entered the second room, which is now empty. It has 21 joined table/bench sets which can seat 8 people at a squeeze. MissQ said that for her final year class there could be as many as 120 students in that room. There is a TV on the wall padlocked behind iron grills. MissQ *[sneering]*: 'Na for show. It is never on and has never been used... for us sha oh!'
>
> There is a projector machine and screen. According to MissQ: 'It used to work but they lost the remote so we have not used it at all this semester'. Four ceiling fans, 3 of which do not work. The only one that does work is the one in front of the room where the lecturer stands to teach. They are all dusty and dirty and had cobwebs hanging from them.
>
> Two clocks on the wall – both not working – they had each stopped at 5.59 and 2.30. One is blue and silver and padlocked inside an iron grill frame. MissQ said that the other one was bought by a student campaigning for departmental president role.
>
> The room is full of cobwebs, dirt, a hole in the ceiling board, exposed hanging wires, with dusty benches and floor. I wonder if there were hired cleaners and/or the last time it was cleaned.
>
> MissQ also mentioned that the whiteboard was promised by the new [Student] President during his election campaign and from its positioning and paint frame, he did replace the old one.
>
> There are 2 noticeboards in the room used for posting results, etc. One of them, donated by NAPS Excos 2004, has a broken glass screen. MissQ explained that it was broken by some students who came to check their results and got angry because they had failed.
>
> Before we left, she concluded: 'Our lecture room looks rundown now but when there is a special programme or event happening, like an inspection or supervision, the classrooms are repainted, fans are fixed and working, the premises is all cleaned up. Afterwards it goes back to normal – THIS!!!'
>
> (Fieldnotes, April 2017)



Photos 6.3 and 6.4: Classrooms in the Psychology Department

Photos 6.5 and 6.6: Classrooms in the Psychology Department

As observed earlier from Aagaard and Matthiesen (2015), MissQ seemed to, perhaps unconsciously, assign negative meanings to the material presence of items in the classroom including the clocks, television screens and technological equipment because none of them were functional. It was therefore not a space that appealed to her, apart from the times when

it was refurbished during significant events or programmes. For instance, when a water factory was built and launched close to this department, external visitors and dignitaries were invited, which resulted in the make-over of the department and its classrooms, thereby giving the environment a different appearance.

On the campus walk with Marian, we also visited the newer sites on campus – Science Park (housing the departments of Statistics, Industrial Maths, Chemistry and Physics), the Management Building, the female hostel and the main library. At the Management Building, the lecture halls were modern and appeared to be in a cleaner condition than the older classrooms, but I observed that they had dark curtains which prevented the inflow of natural light and air. Marian agreed:

> Yes, Management have their own faculty with plenty of space and other departments use it too. But sometimes they put all of us Mathematics students from different departments together for lecture so it's very overcrowded and hot there.

Photo 6.7: Newer lecture hall in the Management Building

Overcrowded classrooms and lecture halls were a recurring theme in the findings, which I also observed at the Teaching Practice Orientation session for 300 Level students:

> The hall is on the top floor of the 2-storey Department of Education building. I arrived a few minutes after 11am and went upstairs to the hall. There were a lot of students in the veranda as well as inside the hall but no staff which meant that the programme had not started. So I went back downstairs to explore the premises. The main room downstairs is the departmental library… By the time I came back upstairs, the hall was packed full but I was able to find a space.
>
> …During her lecture, Dr. Negendu walked up and down the hall locating any empty spaces between the seated students, then fitting in those who were standing at the back: 'The idea is to learn how to be your brother's keeper. How could you leave your fellow student standing while you take up all the spaces?'
>
> However, for most of the session, there was a lot of noise from students standing outside the hall, looking in through the windows, especially as the register was going around.
>
> The atmosphere here is HOT!!! I saw a lot of students fanning themselves with books or papers.
>
> (Fieldnotes, April 2017)

Given the lack of physical space available for the high number of students, I noticed several uncompleted buildings (see Photo 6.8) during Marian's campus walk, one of which she identified as the Education faculty:

> They started this new building in my second semester of year 2. But I am now entering final year and it's still not finished. So many abandoned projects like this one... Hmmm, I think maybe because of change of school management.

Photo 6.8: Some uncompleted buildings on campus

Somadina shared a similar story:

> Like we have a building that has been there for over 5 years which was started by our former VC – because we have two faculties, Physical Sciences and Natural Sciences. He used to be in Physical Sciences department so he was erecting building for us, for the two faculties (because he had a say) till he stepped down like 2 or 3 years ago. Since then I don't know what happened, the building has been there. Nothing has been done. Sometimes they start a little work but you will see them today, after you won't see them again.

Apart from the suspension of building construction and the conditions of classrooms and lecture halls, I visited two laboratories. The one at the Psychology department was locked up and MissQ described it thus:

> It has some ancient equipment that one of our lecturers bought many years ago. The only thing we did here in 200 Level was to monitor albino rats to test the effects of hunger on aggressive behaviour. It was supposed to be pure practical but wasn't at all. We manipulated the results because our lab wasn't even anywhere close to an exclusive lab for such experiment.

The following excerpt was written from my observations of the second facility at Science Park:

> …but I was pleasantly surprised to see that the lab is so clean and well-equipped! Then became deflated again when Marian scoffed: 'It's still new naaa. You know they won't be able to maintain it.'
>
> (Fieldnotes, October 2017)

The participatory vignettes group also discussed at length the debilitating problems they face from not having enough lecture halls, citing one department that does not have a building. Using Fraser's (2007) meaning of justice as 'parity of participation', this means that some students are unable to attend lectures and they do not have the full and equal access to normal academic activities as their peers do. In this regard, the university has failed in its mission to provide them with the education that they deserve and pay for.

Moreover, the stories above point to:

(i) poor maintenance culture at UniSEN;

(ii) lack of continuity in the building and completion of infrastructural projects between university administrations.

However, in a report produced by the current VC regarding his achievements on the third-year anniversary of his tenure, there was no mention of the uncompleted Faculty of Education building. It did state that Health Sciences and Physical / Biosciences buildings were 68% and 80% completed respectively, indicating an unequal allocation of existing resources.

Ekundayo and Ajayi's (2009) investigation of the difficulties faced by management in Nigerian HEIs suggests that the rapid decay and inadequate 'lecture halls, laboratories, students' hostels, library and office spaces…' (p. 344) prevent HEIs from conducting effective academic activities. A more recent assessment report on the needs of the Nigerian Education sector shows that the poor and deteriorating infrastructure, overcrowded lecture halls, outdated equipment and dilapidated facilities, are yet to improve (IOM, 2014).

Additional environmental distractions to the research partners' academic study are discussed in the next section.

The Learning Environment

When we visited a lecture hall at Science Park, Marian shared her experience of noise levels during lectures:

> Some lecturers do not keep to the timetable and come and insist that it's their time to teach. Meanwhile there is already another lecturer taking a class, so, they divide the hall into two classes. One lecturer takes the back with some rows of benches, the other one at the front. But this one will be shouting, the other one will be shouting, we don't know which one to listen to. It's just confusing.

Similarly, I noted increased noise levels while we were in the Psychology department during MissQ's campus walk. The building is situated next to the school gate which leads to Ivenso Road, a busy street full of public transporters and market stalls (see Section 6.1.3 on the *Accessibility of Roads and Transportation*), as well as numerous off-campus hostels. The participatory mapping group described the noise problem:

> Celine: The last but not the least is this guy *[pointing to her sticker, others start laughing]*. DJ Dan at School Gate!!! He's just a nightmare. Around the school gate you always hear that loud music. There's always music playing around there. God, that guy is my nightmare.
>
> MissQ: That's one person that is everywhere! As you pass him, you will be hearing him. In your hostel, he's still there.
>
> Celine: Even when you want to go and read at Gambo Arena… Like 10/11pm, he's still there playing music. I can't just help but say he bothers me a lot. And whenever you're passing in front of that place, you're forced to…
>
> MissQ: …block your ears… from kekes, bikes, DJ Dan… *[hiss]* abeg!!
>
> Celine: The whole drama that goes on in front if that school gate falls under DJ Dan. I can't deal! I like… in as much as I'm a very errr boisterous person, I also like calm, peace and quiet, like collected… how do I explain it… like a place that you know is errmmm calm, let me say. I like a calm place. I don't like noise, noise, noise. It's just too much!

Notwithstanding this lively interaction, I could sense the dissatisfaction caused by the noise levels within and outside the campus. It reflects my research partners' lack of control over their environment which is one of Nussbaum's (2000) functional capabilities. Although Nussbaum's idea of control of one's environment is limited to the political and material, I would rather

utilise the term here to refer to the physical environment of the UniSEN campus in relation to conversion factors. In Section 2.4, Robeyns' (2007) three forms of conversion factors were highlighted, including personal, social and environmental factors. Here, I considered the opportunities (if any) that my research partners have in order to achieve their educational functionings by converting environmental factors such as noise, classroom location, etc. into learning and wellbeing capabilities. There were other environmental factors that impact wellbeing such as some burnt rubbish heaps which I noticed on the campus walks. One of these was situated close to the Sociology department building, exposing students to the possibility of smoke inhalation during the burning process. The related health risks are discussed in Section 6.1.2 on *Student Accommodation and Amenities*.

My research partners' responses and my own observations enable us to understand how our physical environments are explored through our multi-sensory experiences (Pink, 2009). They show that the surrounding conditions – the heat, bodily sweat, inadequate ventilation, noise, cobwebs, dirty walls and floors, lack of natural light – are likely to affect the students' moods and concentration, lead to poor physical health and safety, and even have a negative impact on their academic performance. This last aspect was expressed by Marian during our campus walk: 'Things just have to improve because with all these *wahala* [problems, troubles, worries], how do they expect us to even study comfortably talk less of pass exams?' Ingold (2011) further stresses the importance of the senses being 'necessarily embedded in real-life practices of looking, listening and feeling' (p. 316), how these senses interconnect in forming opinions of one's surroundings including its material and intangible aspects (Ingold, 2000).

However, in direct contrast to the classroom conditions described above, the Asian Centre at UniSEN is more accommodating and comfortable. This is discussed in the next section as one of the places that impacts the wellbeing of my research partners.

Classrooms – Normal vs. Asian

The university brokered a reciprocal educational agreement with HEIs in some Asian countries to set up the Asian Centre (UniSEN, 2016). Several languages are taught at the Centre and four of my research partners – MissQ, Gloria, Nneoma and one who asked not to be identified even by pseudonym regarding this issue – attend the Centre during holiday periods. The following

narration, written verbatim by MissQ and supplemented with pictures (see Photos 6.9 to 6.11), provides an understanding of the satisfaction she derives from this space, and her aspirations for the end of her degree programme:

> I enjoy learning other languages. Their classes are convenient and the library is accessible. The methods of teaching are different. They have a lovely culture. I prefer their standard of classroom seating to our normal lecture classes. There's always light in the dept (asian), microphone, and well arranged and nice individual seats. The asian classes has television, libraries which is always available at students services. The fans are always working.
>
> I joined Asian class because of 3 reasons… I wish to be one of them [interpreters]… I love learning other languages outside my dialet *{sic}* and this is the only language I have been able to get the opportunity to learn though I can still see myself going further if I get more opportunity like this Asian being taught here in our school. I would love to be multi-lingua *{sic}* because I believe more opportunities will be available for me likewise benefits.

Photos 6.9 and 6.10: 'This place gives me joy' (MissQ)

It is interesting to note the differences between the classrooms I had seen in other departments and at the Asian Centre. It has single chairs (as opposed to bench tables) and is colourful with decorations; there is natural light and the fans were working throughout. Overall, it is more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing than the other spaces encountered. During my time in the field, I observed that those research partners who attend this Asian Centre take their language studies extremely seriously – they give up their holidays at home, save their pocket money in order to pay for the classes, and, for one research partner, even defy her parents' instructions not to attend.

Photo 6.11: Wall display at the Asian Centre

As discussed in Section 3.1, the existence of this Centre raises certain questions regarding Nigeria's wider postcolonial condition, not only in the period following independence from British rule in 1960, but also in scholarship and education. Current debates on the latter in Nigerian HEIs surround the impact of globalisation, particularly from China, with the spread of Confucius Institutes (see Section 3.1 for a discussion of these debates). As Tikly (2001) posits, 'a postcolonial critique draws attention to the transnational aspects of globalisation and of social inequalities… as they have manifested themselves in education' (p. 152). Hence, I will now discuss some of the ways in which the Asian Centre upholds the impact of globalisation, power and postcolonial thought.

Globalisation: The Postcolonial Challenge

UniSEN (2016) promotes the Asian Centre as a place that facilitates the acquisition of Asian languages and cultures to solve challenges in society and provide opportunities for employment. I argue that it is a form of globalisation that results in some inequalities, for example the apparent differences in classroom conditions (see previous photos). Furthermore, UniSEN describes a reciprocal relationship with the Asian institutions which enables 'promoting research on China and scholarly exchange between Nigeria and China; conducting Chinese Language Proficiency tests (HSK), subsisting staff exchange' (UniSEN, 2016 para. 4). To date,

however, UniSEN is yet to send her staff to China or any of the other Asian countries 'to teach Igbo Language and culture' (ibid). Nor has there been any inward student 'exchange' from any of the Asian countries involved in the scheme. In the case of China for example, this situation does not represent a bilateral agreement but reflects only an imbalanced, one-directional scholarship. I argue that this agreement presents the proverbial case of dangling the carrot of aspirations and promises of a better life for Nigerian students in Asian countries and assumes a certain 'they are better than us' mentality. This I consider to be a fallacy since both Nigeria and China continue to receive official development assistance from the United Nations and the Global North (OECD, 2020).

Additionally, Nneoma stated succinctly her main aspiration for attending the Asian Centre classes: 'To study abroad. Do my masters.' However, UniSEN's (2016) figures report that out of 3000-plus registered students at the Centre since 2009, only 400 obtained scholarships for further studies in Asian countries. The effects of this fierce competition for places is depicted below by one research partner who asked not to be acknowledged even by pseudonym:

> I heard that Asian Centre wants to reduce the population of their students… They said the population is now too much and again people do mess up in the main exams which usually takes place twice a year. So, the last two weeks they started assessment test starting from level 5. If you write the exam and you weren't among the number chosen that means you failed and will have to join the lower class. I wrote on Thursday. The result is not yet out and no cut off marks oh! *I just dey prepare myself in case I no make am for my level* [I am preparing myself just in case I don't succeed at my current level]. I can repeat the class but can't go back to the lower class oh! So, the matter dey tiring. Before, classes used to last for 3 or 6 months depending on the level. Now once we're done with the textbook, the level is over and you move on to the next. They just dey rush everything… Before registration is twice a year but now they register almost every month. And each monthly registration is nothing less than five hundred students. It's like they need money so they are now extorting it from any means possible.

This narration summarises feelings of disappointment, concern and frustration experienced by my research partners and other students who have invested time and finances in the hope of gaining further education or qualifications in Asian countries. I also question the contradictory idea of reducing student numbers then registering students every month, since the latter negates the former. While the unaffordable monthly registration fees financially disadvantage some students, this research partner's view of extortion also reflects the wider socio-political

issues of systemic corruption, which will be discussed further in Sections 6.3 and 6.4. The reduction of student numbers is a structural constraint that can adversely affect the research partners' agency, individual morale and wellbeing, and could cause them to lower or refine their aspirations (DeJaeghere, 2018).

Moreover, I argue that on an institutional level, this globalisation model perpetuates not only infrastructural and student inequalities but also postcolonial and neo-colonial power dynamics. Some development scholars have used the political term 'soft power' in reference to the 'socio-cultural elements of Chinese assistance to developing countries include training… [and] scholarships for university study in China' (Carter, 2017 p. 4). Likewise, from King's (2014) work on the benefits of China's co-operation with African HEIs, the researcher highlights 'the explicitly ethical discourse of mutuality, friendship, common development…' (p. 168). Similar to my earlier critique of the imbalance of scholarship between Africa and Asia, King also questioned whether China's educational aid represents a 'win-win for all on an equal and reciprocal basis' (ibid, p. 153) or has rather the potential to exploit African scholarship to gain more soft power (see discussion in Section 3.1). Regardless of the intention, the outcomes suggest that the latter applies in this context and therefore detracts from the discourse on postcolonial freedom for Nigerian students.

6.1.2 Student Accommodation and Amenities

My research partners raised several issues regarding their hostel accommodation, both on and off campus. Within the main campus in Ajuba, there are three hostels – male, female and Gozie Hall (mixed sex), albeit with limited availability – to first year and final year students only. Outside the back gate of the campus premises, there are numerous privately owned and run hostels at Ivenso and more located in other areas of Ajuba town, including those found in Government Quarters, Obienu Site, Ime-Ajuba and Bonny.

During fieldwork, I sought and obtained permission to visit Nina's room in Gozie Hall on campus and MissQ in her hostel at Ivenso:

> I like living on campus, especially this hostel. We have constant electricity and water. What I find challenging is that there are different people from different places, different religions. It can be depressing sometimes, for example we

> Benoni State people don't like Agwu people because they are very sly and selfish. Then the gossip, it's too much…
>
> Aaah, rats!!! We have them here oh, *rapu cha kwa ife ana akọ* [never mind what people are saying about this]. I have stayed with dirty roommates, that's why we have a duty roster in some rooms *{pointing to a piece of paper stuck to a wall}*, so that we respect each other and keep the place clean. (Nina)

Likewise, MissQ listed several issues which threaten quality of life in her hostel accommodation. Apart from the noise from the boys who play football in the evenings at the empty land beside her room (see Section 5.1), there was the loud music played constantly by the male student that lives opposite her room – disturbing her from studying in the room. Additionally, basic amenities such as electricity and running water were lacking.

Photo 6.12: Small rubbish heap between classroom blocks

The issue of smoke pollution that was mentioned in the last section was also discussed:

> As we approached the hostels, I noticed similar heaps of rubbish like the ones we saw in the campus, close to her department; and asked about them. Again, MissQ explained that the rubbish gets burnt regularly but the smoke enters the hostels and classrooms and causes her breathing problems.
>
> I was concerned about this impact of smoke inhalation. Has it been brought to the attention of the university authorities and what is been done about it? MissQ shrugged her shoulders: 'Even if we tell them, what will they do kwanu? They will tell you it's the landlords that should deal with it.'
>
> (Fieldnotes, April 2017)

These narrations reflect some of the anti-social, cultural and health implications of hostel-living and sharing of facilities – getting used to and negotiating terms with roommates from other backgrounds; dealing with unhygienic conditions (e.g. dirt and rats); gossip between and about other students; and also noise levels and the risk of smoke pollution. They negatively affect the physical health and safety, social and academic welfare of my research partners.

Photo 6.13: Land adjoining MissQ's hostel

Combined with Somadina and MissQ's conversation (see Section 5.3.2) on how female students deal with their monthly periods and the disposal of their sanitary waste, problems with hygiene and cleanliness raise a gendered environmental wellbeing challenge faced by my research partners:

> Somadina: For my own hostel, we used to have someone that sweeps the hostel, packs the waste bin… The cleaner will now dispose it in Ivenso waste bin then the BESWAMA [Benoni State Waste Management Authority] people will now come and collect but I don't know how they dispose it. But sometimes I do see where they dump it sha.
>
> Zibah: Because in some places there are special dustbins for that kind of waste.
>
> Somadina: We don't have it here. Waste is a waste.
>
> MissQ: The next hostel… the next bush… we throw it there *{both laugh}*. So, that's just it.
>
> Zibah: Do you put it as part of your normal rubbish?
>
> MissQ: Yes oh, we tie and tie and cover it with the blood of Jesus… *{laughing}*
>
> Somadina: …and be praying in your heart that nothing will happen, because it's not intentional and there's nothing you can do about it again. There's no how, that's the only way we know how to dispose. Even at home. We just tie it and put in dustbin. The same way. Imagine you going outside to burn it… wetin you wan burn? *{Both laugh}* People will follow you and ask 'ah ah, are you insane? What are you burning?' There's nowhere to burn sef because my hostel is interlocked[49] too, so I can't burn it.

From this discussion, I reflected on the conflicting responsibilities between university and state, for example, if it is indeed BESWAMA's duty to collect and dispose of waste, then the burning of rubbish heaps within and surrounding the campus should not be necessary. This would not only minimise the health risks of smoke inhalation to students, but it would also allow the safe and hygienic disposal of sanitary waste, which remains a source of concern to my research partners.

Hostel Security

In general, my research partners considered the on-campus hostel facilities preferable to those off-campus. As previously mentioned, there are only three campus hostels compared to numerous options for privately-owned accommodation in surrounding areas and in Ajuba town; hence, campus hostel availability is limited to students in their first and final years of study. Giving a rough, estimated ratio of students as 15% living on-campus and 85% off-

[49] The term 'interlocked' described interlocking bricks on the ground which form a decorative pattern of tiles.

campus, the Student Affairs Officer (SAO) stated that these figures were an improvement on the university's previously non-residential status, indicating that they now have a more 'sociological advantage' than before. The SAO expatiated:

> And in these hostels, there is strong efforts to ensure that the welfare of the student, both male and female, is protected… Like the university environment is becoming more illuminated for students unlike what it used to be, there is a hotline for students to reach security for security issues, so compared to what it was... and there is less manifest cult activities than what it used to be in the past.

On the issue of personal safety, Marian and Gloria agreed that they feel safer in the university due to the increased night-time protection offered by the new study rooms located in the female hostels (discussed in Section 5.3.3 on *Personal Safety*). Akudo and Patricia also confirmed that the security situation had significantly improved, particularly after the university authorities had cracked down on cults. According to Eneh (2008), cults are defined as 'organizations in which the members are usually bound by an oath of secrecy [and often requiring an] elaborate form of initiation and ritual, use of symbols, passwords and handshakes as a means of recognition among members' (p. 3). These cults were menacing as many of their clashes would result from disagreements on who should have control over female students and 'most of the female students involved are often raped, brutalized, and murdered by rival cultist' (Ige, 2014 p. 133).

The SAO further explained that the university was able to achieve a reduction in cult activities through an anti-cult group:

> Even for those living outside the campus, our estates department has a link with hostels outside the university trying to manage them but it won't be as effective and efficient as what is inside [the campus] because in those ones outside the landlords are not under the university. So, what the university can do is to ensure that the welfare of the student is, to the best of their ability, protected. They equally have security machinery like the anti-cult people, in partnership with the vigilante and police, patrolling the off-campus student hostels. The university is also part of that.

Anti-cult groups are formed by HEIs in Nigeria and comprise of students and security agents 'to monitor and check the activities of cultists on campus' (Ajayi et al, 2010 p. 158).

However, Somadina and MissQ disputed some of the SAO's statements above. Describing the anti-cult group as more of a surveillance body set up by the school authorities to monitor everything that happens in and around UniSEN, they revealed the following:

> Somadina: It's easier to get through them than to get to the school authorities… But they are misusing their authority. Like when my classmate reported a lecturer for always failing her, the lecturer came with anti-cult to harass her in our exam hall. They stopped her from completing the exam, dragged her out of the hall and that was it. Later she told us that the man keeps failing her because she don't *{sic}* want to sort[50] his course. Sometimes if anything happens in the hostel, they [anti-cult] will still come and intervene…
>
> MissQ: The only time they do that is when they want to come and collect rent, or maybe when some people fight sha because the last time that two girls fought in our hostel, anti-cult came. But in our hostel, we have security and our caretaker is living with us, so I don't really think it's the same with yours *[to Somadina]*. But me I think even the caretaker and security is part of them because of the rent collection thing. For me, I moved in there February last 3 years… 1st of each February he [caretaker] will come early morning, as early as 6 or 6.30 to come and knock on your door that anti-cult is here, you should come out. He will not even allow you to do anything oh, he'll just lock your room. You'll keep begging, begging, begging, sometimes he will answer you or sometimes he'll just leave you and go back to where his family stay.

These narratives expose the flagrant harassment of students by lecturers and landlords; the anti-cult group is mandated to support and protect students but instead has become a powerful and slightly ominous form of surveillance over the girls' lives. Such abuse of power and unethical means of control is indicative of a failure by the university authorities to meet the duty of care they have for the students. It also shows a lack of social responsibility and is a form of injustice against them. According to UniSEN's Handbook (2016), in a bid to protect the rights of students, the Student Affairs department aims to inform them about the regulations and to advocate for them as required. The regulations further state that the university will not tolerate situations where staff intimidate students or between students. Despite this, such incidents as described above by Somadina and MissQ are clear examples of bullying and oppression from staff and landlords that demean the dignity of students, cause feelings of fear, worry and anxiety, and reduce their agency, thereby detracting from female students' physical, emotional and mental wellbeing capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000; Loots and Walker, 2015).

[50] As defined in Chapter 5, to 'sort' means to pay for marks and denotes academic bribery or corruption.

6.1.3 Accessibility of Roads and Transportation

One of the challenges to wellbeing raised by most of my research partners was physical access to the UniSEN's campus, as well as access to the various departments therein. As introduced in Section 6.1.1, Ivenso Road is the students' thoroughfare which links most of the off-campus hostels and Ajuba town centre to the university. It is also the most problematic road for university stakeholders and residents alike, particularly during the Nigerian rainy season[51] (see Photos 6.14 and 6.15 taken by MissQ of the access roads from her hostel at Ivenso). The condition of the roads results in exorbitant transportation costs and contributes negatively to wellbeing, particularly for women (as we will discuss further below).

Photos 6.14 and 6.15: Access roads from Ivenso hostels

[51] As a tropical country, Nigeria has 2 seasons – the *dry* or *harmattan* season from October to March characterised by low humidity and high temperatures. The *rainy* season normally lasts from April to September with a much cooler climate caused by heavy rainfalls (Come to Nigeria, 2006).

According to MissQ:

> What we do is to wear *bathroom slippers*, like the ones you are now wearing,[52] to pass the muddy potholes and rivers in the road. Then when we get to campus gate, we use *pure water* [small plastic packets of water] to wash our feet and legs before wearing proper shoes to enter school for lectures… *{she shrugs}* We are used to it now.

Photo 6.16: Aerial view of flooded Ivenso Road during the rainy season

[Photo credit - Anonymous source, sent by MissQ]

The research partners who live off-campus are disadvantaged by the threat of unsuitable roads; this threat reduces freedom of control over their environment (Nussbaum, 2006), and perpetuates unequal participation in academic activities for all students, thereby pointing to the need for redistributional justice (Fraser, 2007). Within the campus, some departments were also inaccessible, particularly during rainy season floods as Marian confirmed with photographs taken during her walk at Science Park (Photo 6.17).

[52] *Bathroom slippers'*: MissQ was referring to a pair of rubber flip flops that I had bought from a small market stall on Ivenso Road that morning.

Photo 6.17: Road at Science Park

Along with factors related to transportation, including hindering physical access to campus and the high cost of transport options, there are concerns about female students' bodily health and safety from the risk of water-borne diseases, dangerous sharp objects submerged in the floods that could harm their feet and legs, and blocked drainage systems contaminating the water. According to the WHO (WHO Africa, 2017), these result in a lack of sanitation and hygiene giving rise to common infections and more serious illnesses, including malaria, typhoid, dysentery, cholera, diarrhoea, polio and Hepatitis A. Furthermore, from their gendered research exploring the vulnerability and resilience of women in flood situations, Ajibade et al (2013) posit that women are more affected by the environmental risks to their personal health and wellbeing. Some flood-related health challenges faced by women include urinary tract infections and reproductive health problems (Sultana, 2010). Furthermore, in the event of ill health, my research partners' expressed concern about their poor access to healthcare on campus – to be discussed in Section 6.3.2 on Medicals.

When I enquired about the Ivenso Road crisis, the SAO responded:

> These are things that students need that the government can do. Is it too much for the government to provide access roads to this university? ...and some of these roads are tagged Federal roads, state roads, local government roads, you dare NOT *{emphasised}* get into them! So, we keep making these appeals. I know that this university management has been making very, very serious appeals. They will send delegations, they will use whatever means, they will invite them [government officials] to programmes and use the opportunity to plead. The university attends every programme in town that is organised by the state government just to encourage them to realise that we are partners in this thing.

This abdication of responsibility by the university indicates that the blame for the inaccessibility of roads was being laid upon the state government, but there remained the matter of road access and transportation costs within the campus, which implies that the internal environment mirrors the external. When this was pointed out to the SAO, the reply was, 'We are working on it.' I would argue that this response reflects the nonchalance of the university authorities towards the plight of students and a lack of concern about their wellbeing. This forms part of my critique of the systemic failures of the institution by not acknowledging the concept of 'environmental wellness to recognize the important impact of one's surroundings' (Miller & Forster, 2010 p. 8). Using White's (2015) interconnections between place and human wellbeing, UniSEN's current physical environment, my research partners' interactions with the buildings and grounds, and their exposure to hazardous situations implies that the environmental dimension needs to be reviewed. Such a review to improve the learning environment at UniSEN could include ensuring adequately ventilated and spacious lecture rooms and the completion of unfinished departmental buildings to ease the students' journeys between lectures. These issues are further discussed as recommendations for UniSEN in Chapter 8.

6.2 Teaching and Learning

This section covers academic practice through teaching and learning, including female students' contact with lecturers in and outside the classroom and during project supervision. I describe the academic expectations levied upon students and those that the students exhibit in relation to their wellbeing.

My research partners shared the ways in which lecturers teach and communicate with students, often giving mixed feedback as Marian succinctly stated: 'Some lecturers are good. Others are just terrible.' Edwin agreed, 'We have encountered bad lecturers. Maths teachers are really abusive.' As Marian and Edwin study on the same programme – Mathematics Education – I therefore understood 'abusive' to mean that it was verbal and related it to Marian's comments in Section 5.4.2 about their departmental lecturers calling them derogatory names and threatening that they will not pass his course.

Nneoma's experience further differentiated the students' opinions of male and female lecturers as she recounts:

> What we do with one of them in our department is just pretend as if you're a dumb-head, you don't know anything. If he says 'yes', you say 'yes sir!'. If he says 'no', you say 'no sir!'. That's it. But some female lecturers are approachable.

Pedagogical Effectiveness

Most research partners criticised some of the lecturers on their teaching of curriculum content, assessment methods, attitudes, punctuality and attendance to lectures:

> Some lecturers are very good and break down lessons for us to understand, some use *okpokpo grammar*[53] [indecipherable terms]. Others hardly come or not at all… But I used to approach my fellow students for help because the lecturer's office is unknown except to course reps. (Patricia)

> Last year, I had to take a re-sit. There were plenty of us oh! …Because the lecturer normally doesn't turn up or comes late. One day she came early and it was raining. Because of the rain some of us came to class late but she refused us entry and then gave the rest students a quiz. During exam she set questions from the quiz and those of us who came late failed, hence the re-sit. That thing really upset me. (Akudo)

> That Monday was lecture free day for all students because Vice President was visiting the school. Some lecturers used that avenue to *wicked* [treat badly] some students by giving quiz. No transport inside school that day oh! We that our department made to come for lectures found it hard to leave the school premises because the gate was locked. (Chimdi)

[53] *Okpokpo grammar* is a sarcastic term used when a speaker utters statements that are difficult to understand.

> One lecturer right in front of us during one of his lectures said he didn't graduate with first class so why are we expecting him to give us such. (Nina)
>
> One of our professors owns a psychiatric hospital in Obunti. She is hardly around. In our 200 Level, she came in one day and taught the whole course outline and then made us buy her textbook but no question came out from it in the exam. It was so annoying eh! (Prisca)

Here, it seems that it is the unfair actions, experiences and conflicts of interest by some lecturers that thwart the capabilities of my research partners; for example, Nina talks of not being able to achieve a first class degree because her lecturer had not obtained one or a lecturer using a lecture-free day to set a quiz that students were unable to attend and therefore subsequently failed. The above-mentioned pedagogical practices do not give students opportunities to be or do what they value in terms of achieving academic success, and they even contribute to the institutional structures that reproduce unequal capabilities. In this context, therefore, education is said to 'contribute to capability deprivation… through existing inequalities' (Tikly and Barrett, 2011 p. 7), and this emphasises the question posed by Robeyns (2017) about what can be done about such social injustices in education.

Prisca surmised that very few lecturers know what they are doing although she commended her supervisor as being very thorough, noting that:

> He checks every full-stop, comma, pronunciation. Okonkwo too [another lecturer] checks of the students' work for plagiarism… Only one of the other lecturers can detect manipulation of results and I think that's because he deals mainly in research.

Evaluating the quality and output of their teaching, Somadina further bemoaned that the lecturers 'hardly feed us with the core informations *{sic}* we need to know', stating that everything is based on assumptions: 'It's just hypothetical because they don't really teach us anything'. This indicates to me that my research partners may not be confident in the pedagogical skills and abilities of their lecturers, which again points to issues in quality of education that they receive versus that which they have reason to value. As Walker (2005) postulates, these values tend to highlight the lack of quality in 'educational conditions (teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment), which foster and enable successful and confident learner identities' (p. 108).

The lecturers who are late to or absent from timetabled lectures fail to comply with the requirements of their role and responsibilities to provide knowledge to students, not to mention acting as a bad professional example for them to follow. In addition, students are exploited by corrupt lecturers who purposefully withhold relevant curriculum topics but focus rather on their own agenda through the sales of their handouts and books. None of the above reflect the intention of the Nigeria's National Policy on Education to provide 'quality teaching and learning' to tertiary students (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013 p. 26).

Similarly, UniSEN's claims that the traits of integrity, hard work and discipline of academic staff present students with 'the opportunity to tap from the experience and wisdom of the unique blend of academic and non-academic staff… The University takes pride in the excellence of its academic staff…' (UniSEN Handbook, 2016 p. vi). However, Patricia's story about not having direct access to lecturers shows how limited my research partners' agency is and demonstrates their diminished capabilities in achieving their academic functionings. They are therefore left to learn from their peers rather than engage critically with the academics. However, for pedagogies to be effective, they 'depend on behaviour (what teachers do), knowledge and understanding (what teachers know) and beliefs (why teachers act as they do)' (Husbands and Pierce, 2012 p. 5). On this basis, I would surmise that the UniSEN lecturers' behaviour and beliefs have mainly been detrimental to students' learning. The International Organization for Migration conducted an assessment on the needs evident in the Nigerian education sector, and its report is significant because it helps to identify the skills and competencies that are lacking in the sector. One of its findings is that the lecturers' lack of knowledge and understanding may be attributed to insufficient 'counselling and pedagogical competencies… [and as previously discussed] modern infrastructure, scarcity of teaching materials and inadequate research equipment' (IOM, 2014 p. 11). Overall, the pedagogical process is hindered, which in turn negatively affects the students' learning capabilities.

Impact on Students' Learning

> MissQ: I'm not good at cramming. That's why I don't always make straight A's because what our lecturers like is "give me back exactly what I gave you". But that wasn't the orientation CDSSE [the secondary school she attended] gave us. Anyway I thank God I can actually defend my course which most people in my class can't do because all they are after is to pass their exams, not having a knowledge of what the course is all about.

Zibah: What was the orientation at CDSSE?

MissQ: You dare not repeat what you were taught word to word when answering any question. That is automatic fall-out with the teacher… It's practically "teach me what you've understood from my teaching". UniSEN's standard is totally the opposite of that but God has always been my help and strength.

Zibah: And how did you get used to the change in ways of teaching?

MissQ: One has to adapt naaa. It's close to 6 years now since I got into the [university] system and I have experienced this both for Political Science and Psychology. But it hasn't been easy I must say. And I doubt if other departments are like that.

Zibah: Really? Why do you think they are not?

MissQ: We students do discuss our depts at in the hostel. Someone will tell you they were asked to answer four questions but ended up answering just two. Try that in Psychology – *na sure* [it's definitely] E or if possible F. You must attempt all questions before u can think of anything like good grades.

Zibah: I see. So, is it the discipline or subject area?

MissQ: Maybe. Or maybe the kind of lecturers we have. But that's quite unfair. That's not the best standard of knowing the best ability. And seriously that's Psychology for you. They're supposed to know that people learn differently and they should know that the way they teach things, time, everything, all those things really matter.

This exchange highlights the contrasts in students' learning styles – for MissQ learning occurs through the understanding and application of subject knowledge; for some others, it occurs by rote and giving verbatim answers to test and exam questions. Having been in the second category during my own undergraduate degree, I found it difficult to employ critical thinking skills as a core capability in subsequent work tasks or other educational environments. Nussbaum (2006) refers to this as the capability for practical reasoning and engagement in critical reflection. Drawing also from Walker's (2006) ideal-theoretical list for HE capabilities, female students may therefore be deficient in 'independent and critical thought, critical thinking, reasoning, reflection, learner agency and responsibility for their own learning' (p. 170). This is particularly important in a context that still perpetuates the gendered stereotype that men are considered to be more logical in their thinking whereas women are said to be

more emotional, fuelling the assumption that male students are likely to be more successful in STEM subjects than female (Makama, 2013; Cin and Walker, 2016; Ossai, 2017).

Some research partners described being overwhelmed with the volume of study materials:

> Kelechi: How can you expect me to read like one big handout…
>
> Nina: …and our Law books are LARGE! *{emphasised}*
>
> Kelechi: …one BIG handout and you're supposed to finish it. And it's not just one lecturer on one course oh! They've started giving us 2 lecturers on one course. How will we be able to cope with that?

Prof. Ogbolu from the Education Department explained the justification for two lecturers:

> It has now been made policy that no one lecturer should teach a course in this university… There must be two or more. The idea is to protect the students because if there are two lecturers there is 50/50 percentage mark. So if this person is not doing well, or if there is issue with this person, there won't be issue with the other person. Except when the issue is with the student. So these are efforts to protect the academic welfare of the students.

This response led me to reflect on a few questions: since this is a new policy, was there a consultation period beforehand and, if so, with whom was it conducted? When was the policy implemented? Is there a review period to ascertain its effectiveness? I also surmised that although in principle this policy will benefit the students, my research partners were unaware of it or the rationale behind it. I argue that this is due to UniSEN's deficiencies in communication, as is discussed in Section 6.3.4. Nonetheless, the reality of having such extensive teaching materials plus responding to the expectations of two lecturers on the same course has a negative impact on the wellbeing capabilities for my research partners.

Celine opined that the lecturers' reluctance to teach results in students becoming less productive than they should be:

> But 2 weeks to exam, Jesus! God bless your arse. They will start rushing you to quickly try to cover their course outline you will now be like "where were you all this while?" In my second year, we had Saturday lectures countless times so that a lecturer can cover up for their lack of teaching time. So you find out that the time you are supposed to be using to relax in your house or read or do something like that, they have to drag you to school. And they will tell you it's not compulsory! You know what that means… Exactly!!! It's not compulsory but it's MANDATORY *{emphasised}*. And I think that's what

> contributes a lot to students becoming sick. Most of them will now have exam fever and be afraid to fail.

This account reflects a sense of frustration and helplessness experienced by my research partners and the direct effects of such unrealistic expectations on their learning, physical health, mental and academic wellbeing. It suggests that by rushing lessons and not completing the curriculum, these lecturers display a lack of planning or even a nonchalant approach to teaching, resulting in physical and mental ill-health for some students. Other effects on students' learning outcomes include low performance or failure in exams, leading to re-sits and often delaying their graduation from studies. Parental and societal expectations also add to the pressure on my research partners, as Kelechi concluded:

> …they want all As and good grades. My Mum calls me 'C major'[54] but so many things affect your results, like if you don't write your exam number on the paper, they mark you down. They mark on what they know you are supposed to know, not on what we have been taught.

Experiences like this lead to further inequalities in the learning and exam marking processes and indicate that the results are unfairly judged – not on the students' learning capabilities but rather on minor errors that can be corrected.

From all the above, the consequences of this dichotomy between teaching and learning at UniSEN are detrimental to the students' academic wellbeing. It also accentuates their negative capability by undermining their potential to use education as a process to be and become what and who they value (Unterhalter, 2017). It is therefore essential that the teaching and learning processes are reviewed and improved. As I will detail in Chapter 8, these reviews could involve UniSEN's adoption of a critical transformative pedagogy, to include:

- opportunities for academic staff to attend professional development courses to update their teaching skills, methods and techniques. This is a requirement of Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004);
- the provision of creative and transformative spaces of collaborative learning for both teachers and learners thereby giving the students some academic freedoms and functionings; and
- opportunities for training on ethical behaviours towards students such as setting boundaries and protecting them from harm and abuse.

[54] 'C major' is a term that describes someone who receives mainly C grades in his/her school work.

6.3 'UniStress'

The term 'Unistress' was coined by Dumebi during the participatory mapping session. It is used in this section to cover the challenges faced by my research partners from support services, general administrative procedures and the attitudes of non-academic staff at UniSEN.

6.3.1 Administrative Processes

The research partners discussed two areas that affect their wellbeing – the issuing of student identity (ID) cards, and experiences of banks and financial transactions.

Registration and Clearance

> Every student should have an identity card issued by the Registrar. Students are advised to always be in possession of their identity cards, especially when they are leaving campus. Students must present their identity cards before they are allowed to sit for any examination in the University. (UniSEN Handbook, 2016 p. 96)

Although this suggests that each student should have one university ID card, the data shows that in practice students are issued with separate cards as they register for other facilities such as the library and medical clinic. According to Ije, 'the first thing we are supposed to do as a first year student is medical clearance'. However, the following observations were noted during my visit to the library:

> There seemed to be a lot of students coming for library ID registration. LO explained to me later that they were 300 Level students 'because they are nearing final year and need to start their projects'.
>
> He and two other female security staff were directing students to read the notice sellotaped on their table, instructing them about storage of bags in the cubicles, obtaining numbered security tabs, and which items to take with them for registration i.e. bank teller (payment receipt), passport photos, etc.
>
> If the student is already registered, they are to leave their bags as above and show their library ID card to the security staff before entering the library.
> I asked LO if all students have to join the library, to which he replied:

> 'Yes, library registration is a must! The school admin always checks here for students' records and if they are not available, the student is up to no good. The library card has the student's department, registration number and picture. It can be used as ID anywhere in the school and for exams, so getting it is a rigorous process where the HoD [Head of Department] can attest that the person is a student.'
>
> (Fieldnotes, August 2016)

Others determined that both IDs were necessary to be cleared before commencing their degree programmes and before graduation:

> MissQ: I can collect books from the school library for a 2-week period. Late return costs N20 per day, and it will affect your final year clearance.
>
> Celine: I don't have a library card oh! *{The other research partners encourage her to get one as soon as possible}*
>
> Dumebi: Hmm, especially now that it costs N500 before it gets more expensive.
>
> Celine: I still haven't finished my year one clearance because of that medicals.

Likewise, the vignettes discussion group referred to faculty ID cards; both Marian and Gloria lamented that the Faculty student presidents (of Education and Arts respectively) collected monies from the students for this purpose and both 'made away with the money' (Gloria).

These different registration approaches indicate that the processes are unclear, sometimes open to fraudulent activities by some student leaders in charge of collecting funds, and confusing for my research partners to understand. This raises questions about how the registration requirements and processes are communicated to new students; the necessity of the rigorous library, medical and faculty registrations given UniSEN's policy of one ID card per student; and the possibility of maintaining a single computerised system to cover all the registrations (this recommendation will be discussed further in Chapter 8). The other issues are related to the students' financial charges as detailed in subsequent sections.

Fees and Banking

> The University has a number of banks located inside the University premises to attend to the financial needs of the staff and students. Students are strongly

> encouraged not to keep monies with them to avoid theft or loss, but to make use of the banking facilities on campus. (UniSEN Handbook, 2016 p. 100)

The provision of banking services within the campus was conveniently situated and duly appreciated by my research partners, but they also shared some grievances in this area:

> Marian: The banks make it easier to withdraw money and pay faculty or departmental dues, instead of going to town. But mehnn, school fees increments, bank charges, yet no money. Bank won't say 'come and take' but when money comes, they want to take all. Then see plenty queues looking for account numbers... sometimes you stand and stand, they don't serve you. Even after ATM queues to take money, no payment plus they will seize your card.
>
> Dumebi: That's why when I have money I like paying school fees earlier, to avoid the stress because that time when you enter school, line will start from payment counter to the gate. Then Baba[55] now introduced RRR *{loud sighs from the other research partners}* I think it's one of the, the most stressful... kai!!
>
> Zibah: What's it called?
>
> MissQ: RRR. Remita.[56]
>
> Zibah: What is it?
>
> All *{struggling to answer}*:
>
> Errmm, it's this single treasury account, SC or something...
>
> There's something it's called really... whether... sha RRR.
>
> All the payments we make enter one account.
>
> Dumebi: At times you will go there they will tell you there's no network, or that network is bad, or there's so much crowd that is trying to access the system that you can't have access to it. Meanwhile you have already withdrawn the money to go and pay. This is how you'll be carrying the money throughout the week. This is one of the things that pisses me off.
>
> And another thing is that there is so much to pay in the school. You pay school fees, pay departmental dues, pay faculty dues, pay association dues, you pay CEP [Continuing Education Programme] dues, you pay all the dues payable. At

[55] *Baba* is the widely known nickname for the current Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari.

[56] Remita is 'the default payment gateway that facilitates the Federal Government of Nigeria's Treasury Single Account (TSA)' (Remita, 2018). RRR is an acronym for Remita Retrieval Reference, the number generated for payments.

> the end of the day when you check how much you pay per session, I'm like – this one can change a wardrobe for me oh! But *{shrugs}* it is well!

These responses reveal the extent to which they are affected by the numerous fees and dues which they are liable to pay, in addition to the mental and physical stress experienced while making these payments at banks, particularly during busy resumption periods. As with the different registrations discussed in the previous section, there were concerns around the communication of fees information by the university. For example, is it categorised into separate amounts for tuition, healthcare, library and other services, or presented as one total figure? If the former, was it not possible for the payments to be run as a centralised system? Deciding that the issue of RRR/Remita and multiple payments was also worth investigating, I raised all these matters in the interview with Welfare SAO, who blamed the new national system of banking and finance:

> I don't know what to say here but I want to apologise on behalf of the Federal Government… It is a NATIONAL *{emphasised}* policy, they call it the TSA or something. It is terrible! Everybody is feeling the pinch. Let me be frank with you… Before now, when our students paid their acceptance fee, they were given a number and with that number they will go and register at what we call 'students portal' and that's all. They are given a registration number there and that is all! You go to any place – your department, the library, the health centre, you identify yourself with that number, you get in. And that was it! Until they felt that everything must be centralised.

Admittedly, none of my research partners had mentioned the previous system using the student portal registration number, or whether it had worked efficiently; therefore, a comparison could not be made.

The SAO also criticised the Remita system that generates numbers for payments:

> And number *ana enye gi na Remita* [the number you are given at Remita], you cannot duplicate it and use. Once you finish with it, you're finished, you've lost the number.

Students therefore need a different number each time to pay for JAMB[57], for school fees, for their ID card, etc., but the SAO stressed that the fees do not come to the university rather it goes to the Federal Government and the banks. This arrangement means that the university cannot spend any money without the permission of the Federal Government.

From my personal experience, the RRR system of multiple generation of numbers reflects the wider systemic socio-economic and political situation in Nigeria where each citizen is expected to have several forms of identification – international passport, driving licence, national ID card, voter's registration card, bank verification number, etc. Although the implementation of the Remita TSA account by the Federal Government as a central system was to ensure 'accountability and transparency in public fund management' (Udo, 2016 para. 2), it has resulted in diminishing the financial autonomy of HEIs. The SAO's claim that UniSEN no longer has control over students' fees income suggests that this loss of university autonomy through government interference has led to issues such as a lack of infrastructural and research funding, less academic freedom, and constant disagreements with ASUU (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009; Yusuf, 2012; Aigheyisi and Obhiosa, 2014). On the other hand, Arikewuyo (2004), citing Olorede (2001), attributes the ineffective management of available resources in HEIs to 'almost unlimited power to manipulate university resources according to their [Vice Chancellors'] whims and caprices' (Arikewuyo, 2004 p. 19), giving rise to high corruption rates. For example, the issue of the monthly increase in the number of students registered at the Asian Centre (see Section 6.1.1), reproduces the corrupt financial and administrative and practices that the Remita system is set up to curb. Moreover, this inequitable practice reinforces gender and socio-economic injustices within HEIs (Calitz, 2016) because although the financial issues apply to both male and female students, my research partners asserted in Chapter 5 that they are dealt with differently. For instance, male students are generally able to work at any job to earn money, whilst female students experience more difficulty in finding suitable jobs as they are more exposed to harassment. On the other hand, they may get involved in sex work and prostitution to be able to make ends meet. Regardless, the financial challenges have a direct impact on female students by causing them undue hardship and economic insecurities,

[57] JAMB is an acronym for the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board whose function is to conduct entrance examinations and subsequently place qualified students in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria (JAMB, 2019).

undermining their material wellbeing, and indirectly decreasing their academic capabilities (White, 2010; Walker, 2017).

6.3.2 Medicals

Given the importance of health in wellbeing discourse, most research partners were keen to discuss the facilities at the university's health centre, referred to as 'Medicals'. MissQ opined that apart from 'a couple of doctors working there', there was no difference between the centre and the sickbay at her previous secondary school:

> I've been there like 3 times… They treated me but I later travelled home for proper medication. 'Cause the doctor wrote drugs for me but when I got to their pharmacy it was only one they gave me and asked me to go and get others outside.

Other experiences include the convoluted registration processes, confirmation of fee payments, lack of suitable working equipment, unavailability of medicines, lengthy queues and waiting times, poor time management for appointments and lack of communication with students/patients:

> Nneoma: I've not done mine [registration at medicals]. And I'm not planning on going oh!
>
> Gloria: All they do is just collect your blood and do x-ray, that all they do. They did not even tell me anything.
>
> Ifunanya: When I did my medicals, they gave me sample bottle, I got sample and returned to them on the same day. But when the result came out, I think 2 days from that day, they gave me the sheet. Nobody to explain ANYTHING *{emphasised}* to me.

My research partners continued to share their opinions of the quality of care received and the unprofessional practices and attitudes of staff (discussed further in Section 6.3.3). When we visited the health centre during Ije's campus walk, she narrated her experience of registering there as a new student (full transcript is attached as Appendix VIII):

> Ije: When I went for the x-ray, he [the radiographer] said I should pull off my top, move closer to the machine, fold my hands at my back and breathe in.

> Zibah: Naked? Are there no gowns for students to cover up with?
>
> Ije: No oh! Gown ke? Nothing like that oh! He said he doesn't look.
>
> MissQ: Of course he does, who is he fooling? {*Both laugh*}
>
> Ije: He said 'Oya, *do quick* [hurry up], I have too many people waiting'.

This account raised concerns about the privacy, safety and bodily integrity of female students, and I considered if the absence of a female radiographer or healthcare assistant from such examinations was normal practice or perhaps due to staff shortage. According to Kelechi, 'they only have one or two staff there. The service is very poor'. However, the following excerpt tells a different story:

> The Medical centre of the University was established primarily to take care of the health needs of students, staff and their relatives. The main centre is located at Ajuba… The Sick Bay at the university hostel is used to resuscitate sick students before they are moved to the main Medical Centre at Ajuba, if the need arises. The core medical personnel of the Medical centre is: 11 Doctors, 24 Nurses, 2 Pharmacists, 5 Lab Scientists. At the hostel Sick Bay, there is 1 Doctor and 2 Nurses. The Medical Centre has fully functional laboratory services and a state-of-the-art x-ray unit. It offers a 24-hour service to the university community, and has facilities to admit patients… aided by ambulances attached to the medical centre… also has a hotline through which emergency calls from patients in distress are urgently responded to. Hotline: 080… (UniSEN Handbook, 2016 p. 128)

My observations of the poorly resourced medical centre, together with my research partners' stories, reflect the disparities between the Handbook policy on students' health and wellbeing policy and the actual lived experiences. However, the university's claims were corroborated by the SAO, who added:

> I don't know why they don't like going there. One thing is that people easily can bring falsified medical records and they don't want to get them authenticated at the medical centre because they would do those tests again. What do they do? They avoid the place. They give it all sorts of names and hide under those excuses to keep or protect their wrong medical results. That is the truth.

I argue that the SAO's reference to people bringing falsified records is a generalised statement that inevitably excludes most students who genuinely need treatment or urgent medical care. Also, the university's statements deflect from the real issues that have an impact on students'

health and physical wellbeing, such as staff attrition and a lack of appropriate equipment. Furthermore, the university is responsible for safeguarding the bodily health and bodily integrity (Nussbaum, 2000; Loots and Walker, 2015) of female students by ensuring that adequate healthcare support, information and treatment is available in critical areas such as menstrual and sexual health, and unplanned pregnancies (discussed in Section 5.3.2). These are areas of concern for young women; solving these problems is required to ensure gender equity and protection under Nigeria's National Gender Policy, the CEDAW agreement and the SDGs (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006; UNESCO, 2014; United Nations, 2015).

Guidance and Counselling

Apart from physical health, the mental and emotional health of my research partners is another dimension of their wellbeing, one that was first addressed in Chapter 5. Although UniSEN's (2016) handbook includes brief information about a range of services available at two existing centres (Psychological Services and Counselling), the findings indicate that they are deficient (see also Section 5.4.2):

> There was a time I had an issue with this GE [General Education] stuff. That was in my year 1 when the second semester results were coming out. And I needed the G&C[58] to help me out. I went there, they kept on telling me come tomorrow, come tomorrow, the head person is not around, and then I got tired. No one to talk to. Nobody to tell me what to do. So, I don't really know if this thing exists in UniSEN… Yeah, I know the place. It's in Utilities, downstairs BUT *{emphasised}* they are not working. The place is always open but when you enter there to tell them your problem they will not be there to attend to it. And they say it's functioning. I don't know… It's a lie because even since my year one till now I have heard, many people have talked about it – it is not functioning! Those people, they don't attend to peoples' problems. (Marian)

I reiterate here that denying students these crucial services is a systemic failure of the university, which could result in mental ill-health, barriers to academic success and even withdrawal from education. This is supported by Mahadi's (2007) research findings in that 'Guidance and Counselling Units in the Universities do not offer enough assistance as to discourage social ills and vices like cultism, robbery, examination malpractice and anxiety' (p.

[58] G&C refers to the Guidance and Counselling service.

142). I also observed that there seemed to be little or no discussion regarding students' mental health, as reflected in the following excerpt from my research diary:

> Transcribing some of this data today has been quite harrowing. Reliving this particular interaction with MissQ has upset me. She sounded so low, so pained (?) as she narrated her experience. I also feel angry that she cannot access basic counselling services. She said they are useless so there's no need. Kelechi and the vignettes group said the same. It's like they've given up. They have nowhere to get help from. Considering everything that these girls go through, I wonder how they really cope. And who knows how bad things are on the inside? I certainly don't! ☹ And anyway, WHY is no one talking about this?
>
> (Reflections, November 2017)

The WHO defines mental health as 'a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community' (WHO, 2014 para. 1). Furthermore, the organisation's constitution states good health is characterised not only by the absence of illness and disease, but also mental, physical and social wholeness (WHO, 2020 para. 1). My critique of the inadequate G&C and other healthcare services particularly to female students adds a further argument in this study, namely the gap in provision and dearth of discourse relating to the mental and emotional aspects of their wellbeing.

6.3.3 Attitudes of Non-academic Staff

> The University has a good mix of teaching and non-teaching staff, with successive University administrations focusing on securing the overall welfare of the students… (UniSEN Handbook, 2016 p. v)

Without exception, all the research partners denounced the negative treatment that they receive from non-academic staff as a detrimental factor to their wellbeing. MissQ narrated how her experiences with the secretary of her department gave her an idea of a research topic for her final year project:

> At one point we thought it was because she was pregnant but even after she came back from maternity leave, she is still like that. I don't know why. Maybe she's frustrated. For example, because we are not allowed to borrow books

> from the dept library, if you want to photocopy, she will tell you to go and bring paper, bring money or ink for the photocopying machine abi you want her to take it out of her salary? She says the HoD does not bring money for the ink. Even the way she talks to us is very annoying. One day she told me and my friend to sweep the office. Can you imagine? That we should pick up the dirty things there. I was dragging my friend away oh! If you hear the abuse that came out of her mouth to the woman. *Ọ bakasili ya mba pieces* [She thoroughly dressed her down]. Because she was so angry!

According to Gloria, 'Most of our these non-acad staff have attitude problem and are very rude. Sometimes you wonder what all the aggression is for'. Also referring to the staff at the Medical Centre:

> The staff are handpicked. Those people don't care about what happens to you or your life. The attitude they even give you when you go there is very bad. they don't have time to listen to your needs… in fact they're very nonchalant about everything. (Kelechi)

In the participatory vignettes group, Ifunanya admitted that although some staff are aggressive, their workload may be to blame. However, Celine was upset not only about the bureaucratic processes but also the treatment she receives from the staff at Administrative Block which houses the VC's office:

> Admin Block entails everything bad, all the endless procedures, the nonchalant attitudes, the staff there eh? I think they tell them that 'if you smile it's against working ethics', or to be nice to someone is just against their rules and regulations. And once they tell you something, they will not repeat it. They have no patience to repeat anything. If they tell you something and maybe, God help you, you did not hear and ask 'Ma, what did you say?' they will not answer you again. You will stand there like a fool. If for any reason they are going to repeat it, they will tell you in a way that you will be so hurt that you will wish you never said something like that. They are never nice.

Moreover, there were instances of discrimination against female students by female staff, especially when compared to the way male students were addressed. Male students are often given preferential treatment and positive attention in certain areas over female students, evident in MissQ's story in Section 5.4.2 regarding her attempt to distribute questionnaires from her final year project at Admin Block. The experience supported her project topic on 'Conscientiousness and paranoid ideation as a predictor of verbal abuse among non-academic

staff'. As MissQ postulated, 'you see now? They are just displaying exactly what I am researching on'.

Therefore, my research partners' interactions with the administrative and other support staff at the university do not only leave them feeling devalued, disrespected and unimportant, but they also highlight cases of own-gender discrimination by a specific group of staff. Through this and other case studies researched, for example by Morley et al (2006), we can see that daily life experienced by female students and staff in HEIs is 'highly gendered' by symbolic and material constructions of power relations (p. viii). The power relations described here are constructed in ways that deprive or exclude female students, and as we discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, cause disparities between them and the male students. For my research partners, this takes the form of withholding administrative and other support, giving silent treatment, verbal attacks, and shifting responsibilities from the university authorities to the students. As a result, this hinders the female students' academic progress, perpetuates gender inequalities and reinforces rather than curtails negative practices that affect their wellbeing. To counteract these institutionalised injustices, HEIs will need to ensure that their female students are given equal opportunities and treatment, and must support female students to realise their agency and social value (Fraser, 2007).

6.3.4 Communication of Information

This section covers the university's means of communication with students, starting with new students' induction.

> I want to say that my department [Student Affairs] is doing well. We have the responsibility of organising these orientations, seminars, programmes that we spoke about in the first instance, just to intimate the students and let them know. And at their orientation, they are taught about the use of the library, there are usually library staff that address students during the orientation and they tell them these things. (SAO)

Presenting this to the vignettes group, Nneoma shared her own story which differed from the above claim:

> Yes, we had orientation in our year 1. It was okay but there are also many things they didn't tell us then and still now. So, we just help ourselves in our WhatsApp class groups. Or our course rep will send message whenever they hear something. Sometimes lecturer will just announce something in class and we have to run around to get the info before rumour will lead us astray.

Likewise, MissQ described how arrangements were made for her Psychology clinical posting; informal and vague methods of communication inevitably resulted in some confusion.

> MissQ: The lecturer just told us we'll be meeting on Monday by 7am.
>
> Zibah: Meeting where?
>
> MissQ: At one of the centre *{sic}* we will visit.
>
> Zibah: Did they give you any information, leaflet or handout about all this?
>
> MissQ: Nope. We'll see and know everything when we get there. But we got some info from the previous set.

This not only reflects poor administrative planning and disorganisation from the university or relevant department, but it displays a level of unprofessionalism on the part of said lecturer. Information obtained through social media, course reps or from a previous cohort of students is likely to be misunderstood or wrong. This could result in some students being practically unprepared, late to lectures or exams, and mentally stressed and anxious, particularly those who tend to be more organised. According to Robotham and Julian's (2006) review of the literature on stress and the HE student, these are some of the issues that negatively affect wellbeing.

Timetabling and Announcements

The timetabling of lectures and exams by the university's administration seemed to be challenging for my research partners. Apart from timetable clashes, some lecturers come to classes very late thereby keeping students waiting for long hours. Dumebi narrated that sometimes there is a late announcement changing the lecture venue, resulting in students having to move from one end of the campus to another. This implies more time wasted, the requirement to spend extra money for transport fares, physical stress, discomfort and effort, and even after all the moving around, the lecturer might still not turn up. As previously

discussed, this lackadaisical attitude from certain lecturers shows that they are not committed to or cannot be bothered with keeping to the timetable and their teaching responsibilities, which causes further distress to the research partners waiting for lectures. A further constraint with timetabling is the length of lecture periods, particularly on certain days when lectures start at 8am and last until 3.30pm. On one such day, Gloria recounted, 'I didn't take anything before leaving home this morning. We had three long lectures in a row. I really thought I will faint today. *E no easy*! [It was not an easy time for me]'.

These stories detail my research partners' responses to timetable constraints, unsuitable timing of lectures and insufficient notice to prepare for examinations, pointing to their capability to be resilient and tenacious despite the challenges they face (Walker, 2017). Moreover, their bodily health and physical capabilities are affected through the lengthy wait and lectures in the heat, unconducive atmosphere, and sometimes even hunger from not eating before attending lectures. Female students are therefore more disadvantaged by these timetabling challenges than their male peers, as Batz and Tay (2018) explain in their work on gender differences in SWB. They posit that the differences are influenced by structural, social, biological and physiological factors; therefore, I argue that some of these contextual factors may not affect male students as negatively as they do with female students.

Another issue that directly impacts the female students' wellbeing is the locations where timetables are displayed. During their campus walks, both MissQ and Marian showed me a few noticeboards with broken glass (see Section 6.1.1 on campus infrastructure) and wooden frames which were hanging off their hinges – which are dangerous as they expose the students to bodily harm. Marian also took Photo 6.18, of a place popularly referred to as 'Bus stand' and narrated:

> This place can be confusing eh. They call it like that because this is where transporters stop when we want to attend lectures at MPH *{pointing to a building nearby}*. But the school and other people also uses this place as noticeboard, that's why you see all those papers. The worst thing is that when they release exam timetable *{sic}* this place is always crowded. For short people like me, no chance to see anything. Sometimes I wait till night and bring torch to check my own, or I will some boys like Edwin to check for me since he is tall. Sometimes sef I have to wait like 2 or 3 days for less crowd to check it.

Photo 6.18: 'Bus stand' at UniSEN

I noted that Marian seemed to blame a physical attribute i.e. her height, for not being able to access her exam timetables, rather than the positioning and location of the noticeboards. Also note-worthy is her gendered assumption in asking her male peers because they are taller than she is. This points to a physiological factor that influences gender differences, according to Batz and Tay (2018). Furthermore, in her attempt to find other ways to check her exam times, she must either risk her own safety at night-time in a dimly lit area of the campus or rely on others who may obtain the wrong timings. I also considered that in inclement weather, there would be queues of students waiting to check in cold rain or hot sun from which they could develop ailments such as colds and/or coughs, pneumonia, headaches and heatstroke. As with releasing examination results, the wait or delay in checking timetables may cause anxiety and stress to students, thereby negatively affecting their emotional wellbeing functioning (Nussbaum, 2000).

From all of the above, the deficiencies in UniSEN's clear communication processes are likely to negatively affect my research partners' studies and in turn their capability for effective learning. According to Robeyns (2016b), the CA can also be used to analyse public values such as institutional efficiency. I therefore posit that as communication is an important value for

students, these poor standards of communication indicate UniSEN's inefficiency in meeting the students' educational capabilities. Some remedial solutions for better communication strategies will be recommended in Chapter 8, including the use of affordable information technology intranet software for students to access.

6.3.5 Staff Unions' Industrial Action

One challenge faced in planning the periods of fieldwork and data collection was the academic calendar, especially around examination periods and school holidays. Superseding these was the constant threat of industrial action or strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) and the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU). The following excerpt is taken verbatim from a WhatsApp conversation around a planned field trip:

> January or February is good. Cus students should have been back by then. And I heard Asuu will go on strike this October… Same old reason. Increase in salary I guess… As in ehhh, they don't even consider us sef. If two elephants are fighting it's the grass that suffers it. I don't like staying at home, and if they go on strike anytime we resume, they tend to rush us i.e in our studies, and our lecturers. Which is very bad. And I also I prefer being in school all day than staying at home. (Prisca)

Given ASUU's history of strikes, the last of which was in 2013 and lasted nearly 6 months (Agbakwuru, 2017; Adedigba, 2018), this news did not come as a complete surprise to me. Rather, I observed that Prisca had obtained this information from sources other than an official announcement from UniSEN, confirming our discussion in the previous section about the dearth of communication to students[59]. Marian's claim that the students were neither informed about the strikes nor the reasons for them, was corroborated by Eniola Opeyemi, an ex-Coordinator South-West zone of the National Association of Nigerian Students, who further stated that 'the union should have carried the Nigerian students along in its decision' (Uju, 2017 para. 21). Moreover, my research partners were unsure whether this was a warning or an indefinite strike, and harboured fears from rumours that the end of the strike would herald a steep increment in tuition fees. Refuting this, the anonymous UniSEN staff member alleged:

[59] At the time of writing this chapter for example, ASUU commenced yet another nationwide industrial action on 4th November 2018. However, UniSEN issued the first official communication regarding the strike one week AFTER on 12th November.

> Today what ASUU is fighting is for students' welfare – for their school fees to be reduced, for them to have good accommodation where they can read safely, for them to have food to eat, to be part of the management of every university so that they too can have their interests represented at the highest level.

I found no evidence of this rebuttal in the statement issued by ASUU dated 12th August 2017 listing their reasons for embarking on industrial action (attached as Appendix IX). Nonetheless, the failure of staff to engage with students around their industrial action, even when this was claimed to be in the students' interests, is unacceptable. There is de-humanisation of students when educational institutions are overwhelmed with demands beyond their capacity or are subject to poor management.

Of further concern was the uncertainty of the length of strike period; during those periods, students are at home doing nothing, as Prisca alluded to, resulting in students 'seen loitering around their hall of residences and classrooms... confused whether to vacate the campus and go back to their parents since they did not know how long the strike would last' (Adeyemi et al, 2018 para. 2,3). For those who do return home, female students are more likely to face accusations and questions about how they keep themselves busy during the strike. For instance, Opejobi (2017) opined that one of the effects of the strike could result in many female students becoming engaged in prostitution and sex work. In relation to gender justice therefore, staff industrial action not only impinges on the rights of students to access education, but it also means that female students who are broadly unable to access short-term employment will be expected to take on the household work such as caring for younger siblings, cooking, cleaning and other household chores (Adesulu et al, 2017). On the other hand, male students who are able to work outside the home keep busy during strike periods, as Edwin confirmed, 'I just went to a building site near our house and got a bricklaying job, even without experience. All na money for hand'.

Regarding the industrial action by NASU, MissQ recounted:

> Inside school non-academic staff are on strike so no more use of generators in school. People will be having lectures under uncomfortable conditions. Like Tuesday and Wednesday, we were locked out for over an hour before our HoD came and ordered them to unlock for the students to have lectures. Though I heard this one is pre warning strike… As in eh, the whole issue is pissing me off, *I no fit* [am unable to] read or sleep.

Therefore, the impact of staff industrial action on my research partners' mental, physical health and academic wellbeing is wholly negative. Inevitably, the closures disrupt the university calendar, affect teaching and learning, delay students from graduating and achieving their future professional ambitions.

6.4 Student Activism

The issue of student activism was first raised during MissQ's campus walk (see *Fieldnotes, April 2017* in Section 6.1.1) in reference to one of the clocks in her classroom. She mentioned that it was purchased by a student campaigning for the role of departmental president:

> But he didn't win. *Nepo*[60] killed him. If you don't know the underground people to meet you won't get lecturers' support. And there was too much manipulation and rigging of votes. *[Shrugging]* That's politics for you. (MissQ)

However, this is in direct contrast to the UniSEN's view that:

> Students are allowed to freely choose their leaders without interference from the University Management. The elections are usually free, fair and peaceful, and have been acclaimed by all students as a model for others to emulate. (UniSEN Handbook, 2016 p. 97)

The electoral process is undertaken by UniSEN students to appoint leaders for the Student Union Government (SUG), as required by the university and supervised by the Student Affairs Department. This indicates that the idea of the SUG came from the university and as the association is overseen by the same authority, there are likely to be limitations on the autonomy and freedom granted to students to run it independently from the university's control. Faced with these conflicting claims from MissQ and UniSEN, I questioned the validity of the latter's claims of 'free, fair and peaceful' elections.

One of Nussbaum's (2000) human functional capabilities is affiliation, which involves the protection of 'institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech' (p. 79). Although affiliation is

[60] *Nepo* is used as a shortened form of Nepotism, which is defined as 'the practice among those with power or influence of favouring relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs' (Lexico, 2018a para. 1).

practised through student activism at UniSEN, its effectiveness is still to be determined. This section will therefore cover the power dynamics within and between the student body and the university, corruption in the political process, the responsibilities of the SUG for student welfare, and gender imbalances in the student political arena.

6.4.1 Power, Unionism and Rights

To ascertain where the problem lies in relation to student activism, MissQ suggested that we interview Prof. David Adaji, the current UniSEN Chairman of ASUU (see Section 6.3.5), who was also formerly a SUG President. She prepared the questions and conducted the interview while I recorded it and took notes. Prof. Adaji was able to relate to the issues from both perspectives, and on the matter of the SUG, he stated:

> The problem is that most students in this university are docile. They don't want to speak out. So, while these opportunities are there for them to seek help for themselves, MOST *{emphasised}* hardly stand up for themselves even though there's a system that will protect them when they do so. MOST - over 80% - will not want to come out for their rights. So, the battle now is to encourage the student union to start empowering the students so that they can stand up for their rights because if these opportunities are there and if they cannot explore or you are not exploiting or using them, then the tendency is that you are not helping even some that want to do things right. ...So, as I always say the problem is that the docility of the students to know that they are university students which they should help to drive the society forward.

These assertions reveal the expectations of the SUG in representing, supporting and directing the student body, not only from the students themselves but also from ASUU. However, I could also interpret the situation as a form of blame game, where the university authorities appear to deflect their responsibilities to engage students, and then ASUU and the student body blame the SUG for their lack of effective leadership. Moreover, there are several questions to consider here. For example: What are the students' rights? Are they aware of these rights? Who has the responsibility to inform the students of their rights – themselves, the SUG, the university authorities? Does the SUG receive any guidance or training for their roles? Who delivers this training and is there a programme laid out for it? What are the opportunities referred to? How are the opportunities identified by the SUG? How legitimate also is the claim that the students are 'docile'?

As we reflected on the interview afterwards, MissQ agreed with his assertions and offered some reasons:

> MissQ: Well, coming to this the students are weak yes – in the sense that no one is willing and courageable *{sic}* enough to come out to say anything based on the past experience…
>
> Zibah: The Chairman used the word 'docile'.
>
> MissQ: Yes, it's because of the past situation that students became like that, though I don't really know the history of the students before I came here.
>
> Zibah: Hmmm, okay. I would like to find out if really it is from their past experiences or if it is just fear of speaking out generally.
>
> MissQ: Yeah. The fear of speaking out has to do with that SUG president that was expelled, not minding his background[61]… If such a thing could happen to someone like that with all the prestige and backup, who is an ordinary student to speak up?

This last statement supports my earlier argument in Section 5.4.3 regarding the institutional culture of fear that permeates the student body at UniSEN. This fear prevents students from voicing their problems and grievances because of possible repercussions and discourages female students from applying for political positions in the SUG, as I will discuss in the next section.

Apart from issues of docility and students' not speaking out, Nina reiterated the crux of the matter thusly: 'I think the main problem with us is that we just don't know our rights!!!' I therefore assume that if students are fully aware of their rights, opportunities and responsibilities, they would fight for them. The librarian agreed on the necessity of students' activism, particularly relating to power, during an interview:

> I worry a bit about students' rights. Of course, all I've been saying is that these students don't even realise that they are [students] and should express themselves as such. Student unionism is meant to protect students' interests… Do the students want that? When ASUU is making every effort to protect them, these few people I was talking about in the system… they will turn round, hijack the students' union, give some of them money… When the SUG want buses, they get to politicians and ask for money, these politicians give them and take away their conscience and their rights. (Mrs. Chinyere Enuma)

[61] The story behind this is that this SUG president is the son of a highly ranked staff member at the university, hence MissQ's reference to his 'background… prestige and backup'.

This narrative implies that there are certain influences within the university that retain power over the SUG, their elections and choice of candidates. In turn, the SUG leadership seems to reflect the politically corrupt practices prevalent in the wider society and country (Tignor, 1993; Dike, 2005; Ogbeidi, 2012), as affirmed by Chimdi:

> It makes me so angry. Can you imagine that before the last elections, I heard one of them asking "how can I finish being a student union official without buying a car?" This is a university student like me saying this oh! *[In a slightly raised voice]* Is that car the most important thing for us the students you are leading? You want to buy a car and drive around like big man. And you are not yet working...

The misguided quest for personal benefits and the political control from powerful figures have resulted in students losing their rights and opportunities through the in/actions of their SUG leaders. The effect on the wellbeing of students not only includes the lack of welfare but also the loss of voice. Disempowering the political influences is likely to restore these benefits to the student body. Similar desires were expressed by Prof. Adaji:

> As someone that has spent virtually all my adult life in the university, as an undergraduate student and later as an academic staff of not less than 16 years' experience, I can tell you that the SU has lost the essence of student unionism, which is welfarism of the students. Now they are looking for personal money to drive cars while they are students, to live big like a typical Nigerian politician while they should be the one doing the opposite. So that mentality first of all has to be taken away from the student leadership and once that is achieved they can now be able to whip the student body into shape whereby leadership is about service not about material gains.

Reflecting on my own experience as an undergraduate student in Nigeria during the late 1980s, I am conscious of the fact that student activism has taken a different turn. During my four years of undergraduate study, there were six demonstrations and riots instigated by the SU body, which fought for the rights of students and resulted in as many university closures. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) refer to that period as one of 'volatile and militant student unionism... the unbridled student violent reaction to national issues and internal problems' (p. 345). From my own epistemic viewpoint, I would argue that although the university closures succeeded in curbing the negative aspects of unionism, the riots did receive some attention from the University authorities who then listened to the SU body and attempted to resolve the issues

they raised. Agreeing that the said period was a defining time in the history of student activism, Prof. Adaji opined:

> The leadership of this student body has to be worked on. That is what we [ASUU] are trying to do by helping them to come to what it used to be in the late 70s and the 80s when unionism was very vibrant and they were keeping government and authorities on their toes.

Likewise, there are unequal power relations and substantive gender-based imbalances within student activism, as addressed in the following section.

6.4.2 'No female student can run for President'

One of the critical issues for female undergraduate students is gender equality/equity in student unionism and political leadership. While some research partners discussed this situation in regard to speaking up about their challenges, the rest were convinced that it was futile to do so, due to their feelings of powerlessness or hopelessness that changes would be implemented (see Chapter 5 on the fear of speaking out).

> Somadina: Hmmm, I noticed that when they set up the SUG committee, the male students are more favoured. They said it's because they are exercising their powers like when they see a male student or a female student, not minding what happened, they will deal with the male student first and then ask what happened to the female student…
>
> MissQ: And most of the offices that they give to students, I notice that it's always the males that are the president.
>
> Somadina: Even the presidents in the departments.
>
> MissQ: Yes! Females are not allowed to compete.
>
> Somadina: That's true. Coming to a faculty now, it's VERY *{emphasised}* hard to see a faculty president being a female. Let me say if they have 10 faculties in school, I've not seen a female faculty president, I've not seen a female departmental president. I only see female course reps AFTER *{emphasised}* so much struggles and pressure. And maybe if she does anything, they try to go against her office and put in query. So most times it's always the males trying to take over all the offices, while the female will always be their vice. No female student can run for President.

This exchange highlights the inequalities and gendered hierarchical issues between male and female students at UniSEN. According to Odejide (2007), a gendered hierarchy privileges male students and credits them with better leadership and people management skills than those characteristics exhibited by their female peers. It further exposes the existing political power imbalances that directly oppose the international policies referred to in Chapter 2. For example, Article 7 of CEDAW (1979) states that to eliminate political discrimination and ensure equality, women must be accorded rights to stand for and to vote in all public elections. Fraser (2007) further ascribes part of this maldistribution and misrecognition of justice to the 'institutionalized patterns of cultural value' (pp. 26-27), indicating that in order to attain social value, regard or appreciation, the organisation or group must accord equal opportunity and respect to all its stakeholders thereby increasing parity of participation. However, a female lecturer substantiated Somadina and MissQ's claims:

> Girls never really vied for the presidency of this students' union we are talking about. They would always vie for the vice president. I look forward to a day when a girl will come, pick the president's form and emerge as the winner. Even in the departments, in the faculty level, they go for vice president and second course rep. In my faculty, I said ANY girl who feels like, should pick up the form for the presidency. Somebody even did. I was so happy. Suddenly, she withdrew. By herself. You can't imagine, I was so miserable that day. She said, "Let me just go for vice president". She never really told me why, in spite of my insistence. I even told her I will not allow her to pick the vice president form, that she must go on with the presidency one, and she said okay she will now drop both the presidency and vice presidency. And I said, "Sorry, go and do whatever you like", because I didn't want a complete loss which I saw already happening. Anyway, she won the vice presidency role, but I know she would have won the presidency if she had stuck to her plan. But I think she was discouraged. (Dr. Regina Okorie)

Although Dr. Okorie assumed that the student was discouraged from continuing despite offering her support, I submit that the student's absolute reluctance signifies a likely threat which she was too afraid to either report or continue with her aspiration. Notwithstanding her refusal or denial from participation, she has experienced diminished agency and a loss of individual freedom in this situation (Walker, 2006).

As Ezedike (2016) posits, patriarchal influences in Africa dictate that men have the right to dominate the political sphere. The gender-based differences and imbalances result from the

patriarchal culture in Nigerian society which also exists within homes, communities and institutions. According to Anele (2010, p. 77),

> It is the same patriarchal culture and ideology that influence the appointment of staff to important positions within the bureaucracy. Thus, patriarchy should be properly seen in the light of gender and family, gender and public office, and male-female relationship.

For example, in Nigeria's presidential elections of 2019, the total number of registered candidates was 146 (for both roles of president and vice president), out of which 28 (19%) were female (INEC, 2019). Likewise, recent figures on each country culled from the United Nations Women in Politics Map (2019) showed female political participation in Nigeria as follows in Table 6.1:

	Rank	% of Women	Women / Total
Women in Ministerial positions	154 out of 188	8	2 out of 25 Ministers
Women in Parliament	181 out of 192	5.6	20 out of 359 (Lower House) Representatives
		6.4	7 out of 109 (Upper House) Senators

Table 6.1: Female political participation in Nigeria 2019

These low percentage rates may reflect the general political unwillingness or apathy by women around being involved in politics, or perhaps an inability to do so because of funding, family and work commitments, and/or lack of encouragement. Despite Nigeria's introduction of gender-based affirmative action[62] in 2000 and the adoption of a national policy of 35% representation for women in politics, these national goals were still not achieved as of 2016 (Omenka, 2017). As for Eastern Nigeria, Ezedike (2016) cites Odunsi's (2010) Igbo proverb that 'when an atrocity is tolerated for a whole year, it becomes tradition' (Ezedike, 2016 p. 349). This response surmises that since women have been subjected to powerful influences by men, they appear to have endorsed male control over the political sphere as tradition. Additionally, Igbo customs and beliefs further relegate women to the home whilst preventing them from vying for political and leadership roles (ibid).

[62] Affirmative Action 'refers to policies that take care of race, ethnicity or gender into consideration in an attempt to promote equal opportunity in socio-economic and political life; It is a policy project aimed at countering discrimination against minorities and disadvantaged social group' (Omenka, 2017 p. 4).

These national and local structures influence the UniSEN context, as Patricia confirmed in reference to her roommate's experience the previous year: 'She was running for Vice-President of SUG. She would never run for President. No female student can do that'. This statement also denotes the unspoken narrative that permeates the student body, with female students resigned to the fact that '*Na so we see am since and na so e go still be* [That's the way it's been for us and it will always be so]' (Anonymous research partner). It also suggests an adaptive preference whereby female students have internalised this limiting view of their capabilities to serve as political leaders due to externally imposed barriers, further negating their own agency freedoms and choices (Nussbaum, 2000; Khader, 2011). Adaptive preferences were discussed in Chapter 2 as the limits within which people can imagine and articulate possibilities for themselves, and in this instance, revealing the female students' lack of awareness of their own agency in facing an issue of patriarchy that disables their gender empowerment. Hence, they are unable to imagine experiencing freedom in political participation due to the continuing coloniality of being female and the gendered oppression that permeates the conditions that they are now accustomed to. A detailed discussion of this follows in Chapter 7.

As I pondered this injustice, I came up with the following questions:

- How has the institution provided an enabling environment for female students to speak out, without fear of punishment?
- How does the university support or empower the female students to run for political positions?
- What about the female staff / academics? Are they encouraged to apply for senior roles? If so, why not same with the students?

(Reflections, July 2017)

I found a partial response to the first question, given by Prof. Adaji during his interview with MissQ:

> As a university that is in a society where there is *{sic}* more gender issues, errmm probably in the Northern part of this country you may have more challenges than you have here in the Southern part. But apart from that, as a union we have a committee on gender and they interface with the female students and direct their issues to us *[MissQ gave me a look of surprise here].*

> As of today, there have never been any major issue they have brought yet and because we have not received official complaints, we assume that everything is working well.

His statements indicate that the ASUU management is in denial of the challenges faced by female students and expose the disconnect between the intentions of the organisation and the realities for the female students. MissQ later admitted that her look of surprise was due to the fact that in the time she has spent at UniSEN, she had never been aware of the existence of the gender committee and insisted that 'I am sure most of our students don't know too'.

Systemic changes: whose responsibility?

> The basic issue in gender relations is the issue of power. 'Patriarchy' will always be there, but what matters is how power is exercised by those who have it, male or female. (Prof. Iloawuchi Ogbolu, 2017)

This affirmation by a male lecturer during an interview presented an opportunity for reflection about the historical influences of patriarchy and what this implies for women in the context of Nigerian HEIs, particularly those who have little or no power to speak of or to exercise. Raising these issues with other respondents, a female lecturer reiterated that 'of a truth, this university is sited in Africa land. Africa, to a great extent, is a man's world' (Dr. Regina Okorie, 2017).

However, the SAO rebutted this claim, stating that 'if anything, this VC has set some wonderful precedents in this university', listing that during his tenure he appointed one female Deputy Vice Chancellor, five women Faculty Deans (of Medicine, Medical Health Sciences, Education, Social Sciences, Arts), and numerous female unit directors:

> I think he has encouraged women beyond imaginable limits. Much more than his predecessors. In spite of these biases, people at the helm are encouraging women. I just wish that women would encourage themselves... I wish to God that all these women will come together and sponsor other women. And before you know it, the women will come up.

My first argument here is that given the patriarchal environment, it is futile to advise that women should 'encourage themselves' without providing equal opportunities, freedoms and support that men have. According to Broderick (2019, para. 1), 'Relying exclusively on women to lead change on gender equality is [therefore] illogical. We need decent, powerful men to step up beside women to create a more gender equal world'. Agreeing that the onus for

women empowerment rests with men, Gordon Cairns[63] claims, 'Men invented the system, men largely run the system, and men need to change the system' (Bourke, 2015 para. 6). I agree with this statement to a certain extent and will discuss it further below. Secondly, the emphasis on the current VC's appointments of a few women for the first time in UniSEN's history, suggests that previous decisions may have systematically favoured men thereby discriminating against women and their abilities to work in senior leadership positions (Anele, 2010). Thirdly, if there are so many women leaders, I pondered the dearth of credible role models such as Dr. Okorie who can encourage, align and guide more female students into top leadership roles. Referring back to MissQ's comment about *Nepo* [nepotism] and her own experiences with her project, it could be said that female students who do have political ambitions do not receive enough support from women lecturers, leading again to own-gender sexism or discrimination (see Sections 5.4.2 and 6.3.3), hence my partial disagreement with Gordon Cairns' statement above (cited by Bourke, 2015). Moreover, Anele (2010), citing Daly (1978) asserts that 'males and males only are the originators, planners, controllers, and legitimators of patriarchy' (Anele, 2010 p. 78). I argue that such views contribute to stereotypes of women as helpless and defenceless victims. It is important that both men and women work in partnership to ensure gender justice and equity and participatory justice at all levels in UniSEN. As Fraser (2007) encapsulates:

> Insofar as the economic structure of society denies women the resources they need for full participation in social life, it institutionalizes sexist maldistribution. Insofar, likewise, as the status order of society constitutes women as less than-full partners in interaction, it institutionalizes sexist misrecognition. In either case, the result is a morally indefensible gender order. (p. 28)

For gender justice to be achieved within student activism, UniSEN would need to adhere to Fraser's (2007) two forms of participatory justice – in ordinary-political representation, and in reframing issues of affirmative action and transformative justice. As I recommend later in Chapter 8, this could be achieved by ensuring that institutional policies and processes both accord female students with full, fair and equal participation in political leadership. Also, tackling all areas where female students are excluded from involvement as peers in the political

[63] Gordon Cairns is 'one of [Australia's] Male Champions of Change' (Broderick, 2019 para. 3).

sphere will have to include all levels of participation including classroom, departmental and faculty representation.

Summary

Building on the findings from the previous chapter, this chapter answered the second research question by identifying the wider factors that affect the wellbeing of female undergraduate students through the experiences of my research partners, the responses of other UniSEN stakeholders, and the content to be gleaned from policy documents. The factors detailed systemic deficiencies and power issues through place and space, teaching and learning, university administrative processes, and staff and student unionism, thereby adding academic, environmental and political elements to the wellbeing capabilities of female students. The chapter also argued that there is an institutional lack of attention to and provision for the mental health of the female students, which is a crucial part of their wellbeing.

In addition to the previously explored themes from my research partners' wellbeing experiences, the factors that have an impact are highlighted below in bold:

Personal – feelings and emotions, religion and spirituality, health and safety, lack of personal agency, ***mental health****.*

Socio-Cultural – gender biases and expectations, bullying and harassment, a culture of fear.

Economic – part of being female for example, high cost of living, prostitution, ***fees and banking****.*

Academic – teaching and learning, administrative processes, staff attitudes and behaviours*.*

Environmental – campus infrastructure, accommodation and amenities, accessibility of roads and transportation*.*

Political – staff industrial action, student activism, female participation*.*

These factors and themes will be mapped towards a new wellbeing conceptual framework in the next chapter.

-7- Re-conceptualising Wellbeing, Capabilities and Gender Justice

Overview

Having detailed the findings of the study in the two previous chapters, I will now synthesise those findings and draw out four arguments in relation to the subjective wellbeing and capability approach theoretical frameworks from Chapter 2. First, there is a reframing of wellbeing terminology from subjective to personal. Second, there is a lack of discourse on mental and emotional capabilities and inadequate provision of support services and resources. Third, there are contextual welfare influences on the personal wellbeing of female students. Fourth, an individualistic approach to supporting wellbeing is necessary before considering the issue of collective action. It should be noted that these four arguments from the study appear in this chapter in text boxes.

The chapter also includes a new conceptual map of personal welfare and wellbeing, capabilities and gender justice as applicable to female undergraduate students in Nigeria.

7.1 Problematising Subjective Wellbeing

Before presenting the first argument, it is important to reiterate that the term *wellbeing* is rarely used within the Nigerian context; *welfare* is instead more commonly understood. For instance, from the description used by scholars such as Dodge et al (2012) in Chapter 2, the concept of wellbeing refers to happiness, satisfaction, autonomy, life's purpose, self-acceptance, realisation of potential, good health, engagement, fulfilment, capabilities, positive relationships, and accomplishment. These terms are all intrinsic, value-laden and relative to each person. In international student wellbeing literature, the focus is on their health, happiness, contentment, comfort and satisfaction with his/her quality of life (Jones, 2011; Guild HE, 2018). This contrasts with the literature from African scholars which emphasises the basic facilities or amenities that ensure the comfortable survival and conducive atmosphere for students' learning (Mahadi, 2007; Subair 2008; Alani et al, 2010). These basic amenities include feeding, accommodation, transportation, provision of guidance and counselling, career

and course information, availability of health and social amenities, marketable degrees and student unionism; in all, these factors stress the importance of economic, intellectual or social welfare to an individual. Furthermore, the data from the empirical findings show that welfare was the term that was generally used although it does not cover the emotional aspect of an individual.

Chapter 2 also detailed the history and general description of wellbeing, including eudaimonia, happiness, flourishing, pleasure, to journey well, prosperity, the idea of what is good for a person or how well their life is going for them, functioning, satisfaction, autonomy, life's purpose, self-acceptance, realisation of potential, good health, engagement, fulfilment, quality of life, capabilities, positive relationships, and accomplishment. I also discussed that some of these aspects of wellbeing can be assessed in different ways, particularly from objective, subjective and human capability approaches.

White's (2010) subjective wellbeing (SWB) framework was used as a starting point (see Section 2.2.3), given that it has been applied in countries in the Global South, including Bangladesh and Zambia. She presents three dimensions of SWB in the shape of a pyramid, showing that each dimension balances with, rather than clashes against, the others. She further suggests that,

> wellbeing emerges in the interplay of 'objective' – that is, externally observable and independently verifiable – aspects of people's circumstances, and their 'subjective' perceptions and assessments of these. Third, placing the subjective at the apex tempers any tendency to divorce 'subjective' from 'objective'. (pp. 161-162)

Given that the word *subjective* is defined as 'influenced by or based on personal beliefs or feelings, rather than based on facts' (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018 para. 1), an individual's inner wellbeing cannot therefore be observed and verified by an objective other. As Naess (1999) rightly surmises, it is not possible to observe a person's perceptions, which is why self-reports or subjective accounts are used particularly in qualitative participatory research. According to Diener (2006), SWB is 'an umbrella term for the different valuations people make regarding their lives, the events happening to them, their bodies and minds, and the circumstances in which they live' (pp. 399-400). This implies that assessments of wellbeing should be a personal and individual judgement, rather than from objectively verifiable external

influences. For example, MissQ was only able to internalise, assess and describe the mental and physical trauma from her painful experience at the health centre despite the nurse's ideas or assumptions of what constitutes her health and wellness (see Section 5.3.2).

Furthermore, White's (2010) statement above about not divorcing the subjective from the objective creates two areas of conflict. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 2, this position directly opposes her earlier critique of OWB theories as 'narrowly economic conceptions of poverty, or restrictively medical understandings of health' (White, 2006 p. 3). If objective approaches do not adequately represent an individual's perspective of their own poverty or health status, then the subjective should be divorced from any such objective misconceptions of peoples' wellbeing. Secondly, if wellbeing 'promises a rounded, positive, and human-centred approach' (ibid), I submit from my findings on RQ1 that a separation is indeed necessary to focus on understanding the experiences and needs of the researched in their own words. Camfield (2006) might agree, in stressing that the value of researching SWB is in asking people their definition of wellbeing as is currently applicable to them, instead of hastily measuring it for them. From Chapter 2 also, the assessment tools used in OWB research are conceptualised as indicators or measurements (Costanza et al, 2007). These words denote a quantifiable form of scale, benchmark, standard, yardstick or evaluation which are incompatible with peoples' subjective perceptions, ideas and experiences.

Finally, it is noteworthy that although the terms *subjective* and *personal* have been used interchangeably in this thesis, I will argue in the following section that from my research partners' stories, the concept of personal wellbeing (PWB) is more applicable in the context of this study than the theoretical framing of SWB.

7.1.1 Wellbeing: From Subjective to Personal

Before moving from SWB to PWB, I revert to the meaning of wellbeing given by Akudo in Chapter 5 (see *Conceptualising Wellbeing*), 'For me oh, it is how things *touch* me PERSONALLY.' The words emphasised in italics and capital letters are suggestive of the nuanced distinctions in the research partners' voices between the subjective and the personal. Akudo's use of the word '*touch*' is significant in Igbo language and Nigerian parlance as it could mean affect,

aggravate, stress, evoke or tempt. From further discussion with Akudo, I understood it as whatever (or whoever) makes her *feel* positive or negative, whether intentional or otherwise. MissQ, Kelechi and Nina also used words such as self, state of mind, thinking, worrying and feeling. To my understanding therefore, these (perhaps cultural) terminological nuances contribute to the use of *personal*, rather than *subjective*, as a conceptual term that provides a clearer and more simplified expression of the research partners' own wellbeing. Gasper (2007) also alludes to this in his conceptualisation of human needs and wellbeing, in that he specifically critiques the fact that quality of life and SWB research historically remained the domain of 'rich countries' until the 1990s when they 'became common in studies of low-income countries… [through] participatory methods of investigation into development studies' (p. 2). Gasper further problematises the idea of establishing a 'set of working simplifications to match [its] context-specific concerns' (ibid, p. 3) in one's area of research. I would therefore argue that although the Eurocentric term *subjective* is suitable for Western or Global North countries, the term *personal* would conform better to the Nigerian context.

Nonetheless, the *personal* in PWB carries deeper meaningful individualistic nuances that have to do with each research partner's 'self – a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action' (Lexico, 2018b para. 1). This links with concepts such as self-perception, self-identity, self-confidence and self-management; and raises the female students' awareness of their agentic control over some parts of their SWB despite outside influences (Atkinson, 2013). I have also discussed that the personal also encompasses some individual capabilities for example, one's bodily health and integrity, senses, imagination, thought, values and emotions (Nussbaum, 2000). It can be said therefore that these are internal elements that influence each person's wellbeing. Furthermore, it can be argued that the afore-mentioned concepts still carry a Western-centric framing (as I have maintained in previous chapters). In contrast, White (2010) assigned human capabilities as part of the relational dimension, arguing that 'people become who and what they are in and through their relatedness to others' (p. 164). In her revised article on relational wellbeing, White (2015) also claims that 'just as subjectivity emerges through relationality, so wellbeing is seen as social or collective, going beyond the individual' (p. 42), and '…asked to describe what wellbeing means, people rarely refer to themselves alone. Rather, their answers include – at least – the wellbeing of those who are close to them' (ibid, p. 6). Still, her updated

framework separates the individual (personal) from the subjective (see Section 2.2.3). Using an example from her research in rural Zambian schools, White (2018) further describes the personal dimension as an individual's relationship with his/her own self, family, friends, teachers, etc. From my findings however, the importance of these external relationships is not emphasised as much as the individual's own inward state of wellbeing, which shifts my arguments towards the self or personal before the relational. I will address this further in Section 7.4 on individual versus collective wellbeing. For now, it should be noted that from their study on the impact of food security on subjective dimensions of wellbeing in India, White et al (2016) propose 'inner wellbeing… what people feel and think they are able to be and do' (p. 336) as an alternative approach to SWB. This is closer to my suggestion and description of PWB and the CA in general.

Argument one: Subjective wellbeing does not adequately represent an individual's deeper sense of self. A clearer distinction should be made between the terms *subjective* and *personal*. A simplified concept of personal wellbeing is more applicable within the Nigerian context.

7.2 Mental and Emotional Capabilities

The findings of this study also highlight the lack of policies or discourse around the mental and emotional health of female students. Swaner (2007) describes good mental health and wellbeing as 'encompassing individuals' abilities to realize their potential, cope with stress, relate positively with others, make healthy decisions, and contribute to community' (pp. 20-21). Despite the inadequate service at G&C, I found neither opportunities for follow-up nor provision of academic advice, professional counselling, diagnostics or treatment for students that experience feelings of anxiety, depression or other emotional trauma. As discussed in Sections 5.4.2 and 6.3.2, this lack of provision and deployment of pejorative discourse also reflects a wider systemic failure in the Nigerian societal context and in the health sector. Female students may be hesitant to reveal their mental health experiences due to a fear of stigma and societal discrimination, as encapsulated here:

> My only understanding of mental illness as a child was what was generally referred to as "madness". In Nigeria, such madness is defined as when one goes out of control and roams about the streets stark naked, half-naked, or clothed in rags and the catalyst – at least, before now – was that this hysteria came as a result of drug abuse, god-divined punishment for one's offenses, or a spiritual attack from an

> enemy. It was not until I was involved in a fatal accident in 2009… I was treated for my physical injuries, but given that mental health is not really considered a priority in Nigeria until one fits the aforementioned archetype, no attention was paid to my emotional or mental wellbeing. (Chukwuka, 2018 para. 1,2)

Such matters are therefore not openly discussed. A search for localised information or statistics on students' mental health was unfruitful, as reflected again by Dr. Ukwuori-Gisela Kalu, a Clinical Psychologist advocating for 'better mental health services in Nigeria [as] she writes about the sparse availability of mental health services, personnel and institutions in the country' (Nigeria Health Watch, 2017 para. 1). The issue does not currently seem to be a cause for concern in Nigerian HEIs. For instance, my visit to the G&C centre at UniSEN proved abortive as I was informed that there was no-one to speak with regarding students' wellbeing. Mahadi (2007), citing Bello (1983), listed 18 experiential areas requiring guidance and counselling by students in a Nigerian university. It is insightful that only 3% of students in Mahadi's (2007) thesis referred to physical and mental health problems. More recently, over 80% of anxiety and depressive disorders were found in low and middle-income countries (WHO, 2017). It was further estimated that as of 2015, the prevalence of both disorders occurred at a rate of 6.6% in Nigeria, translating to over seven million Nigerians (WHO, 2017; Unah, 2018).

There are two issues at stake here: first, the possibility that female students' capabilities for wellbeing have been influenced over time by the process of mental adaptation (Robeyns, 2017) to external factors. Robeyns describes this as the weakened effects of experiencing setbacks in one's life that seriously deteriorated one's wellbeing. An example would be the continuous verbal insults and abuse directed at female students (see Section 5.4.2) which are now considered as the norm. It may be because women tend to 'adapt to their situation and come to suffer less intensely' (Robeyns, 2017 p. 131). I would therefore surmise that female students have accepted such dehumanising treatment as inevitable and their lack of response to these incidents may have developed as a sustained form of mental self-protection and resilience from a harmful patriarchal environment (the continual coloniality of *being*). This is further discussed below as I address female students' deficit capabilities and in Chapter 8 where I advocate for decolonising minds and mentality through the decoloniality of *being* approach.

Secondly, young people are likely to face more challenges with their mental health and emotional development; therefore, denying students support or attention leaves them no

option but to cope, struggle or fight alone. Female students are particularly vulnerable as they are subject to abuse, violence and suffering from the effects of patriarchy. If not well addressed, the consequences can lead to loss of interest in their studies, lack of self-esteem and confidence, increased withdrawal from social interactions, diminished quality of life, and even suicide (Morley et al, 2006; Mahadi, 2007; Ofoha, 2013; Loots and Walker, 2015; Chukwu and Lato, 2016).

Argument two: There is a need for increased awareness and the provision of students' mental health services and resources, as well as gender-related guidance and counselling, identified as a crucial part of personal wellbeing.

7.3 Intersecting Gender Justice, Capabilities and Personal Wellbeing

The research findings provided examples of institutional conditions and wider contextual practices that can either develop or hinder female students' capabilities (Walker, 2003). I discussed positive wellbeing functionings such as Nussbaum's (2000) senses, imagination and thought – particularly in my research partners' enjoyment of art works at FSS, attendance at musical events at Gambo Arena, and autonomous religious expression. Regarding social justice, we also found several forms of 'status subordination' (Fraser 2007, p. 26) suffered by the female students. They include sexual harassment and assault, objectification, demeaning stereotypes of their dressing and behaviour, belittling comments in their daily academic life, excluding them or denying their participation rights in political spaces. As discussed in previous chapters, Fraser posits that such harmful practices are 'injustices of misrecognition… [that] cannot be overcome by redistribution alone but require additional, independent remedies of recognition' (ibid).

This recognition is important not just for the students' current experiences but also for their aspirations and future capabilities. As Walker (2003) stated, 'our experiences in education build over time into inter-subjective patterns and shape what kind of girls and boys, men and women we recognise ourselves to be and what we believe ourselves able to do' (p. 169). The above-mentioned issues of justice are also indicative of some deficit capabilities (see next section) experienced by the female students and by acknowledging their voices, these issues can be used to improve their PWB, reduce discrimination against them and increase gender equity.

Some remedies for recognition and to achieve a better balance of gender justice for female students will be suggested in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

More broadly, an argument is to be made here regarding the power relationship between the Asian centre and UniSEN (see *Globalisation: The Postcolonial Challenge* in Section 6.1.1). In my view, this is an unbalanced relationship in favour of the globalisation agenda promoted by the Asian Centre and reflects the idea that the Nigerian education and language curriculum is inferior to theirs. Further questions can be raised around equality between the two partners: since the implementation of the bilateral and reciprocal agreement, no Asian student has come to UniSEN to learn the Igbo language and neither have any lecturers been sent to Asia to teach the language at Asian partner institutions. I would also opine that the situation might undermine the aspirational capabilities – what they want to be and to do – and values of Nigerian students.

In relation to the issue of gender inequities, I would reason that this agreement reflects the continued postcolonial power structures and patriarchal practices that demean women in Nigeria and keep them as subordinate to men. I therefore suggest in the following chapter that there needs to be a discourse on decolonising approaches: not only around decolonising the curriculum in HEIs but also breaking down assumptions around women and their place in society. Moreover, I highlighted in Chapter 5 the reproducing of 'social inequalities' (Tikly and Barrett, 2011 p. 15) between the students that attend the Asian Centre and those that do not, thereby leading to a deprivation of capabilities (Calitz, 2016). It is therefore important that educational resources are shared fairly in the departments and that opportunities are distributed equally for students at UniSEN.

This intersection between gender justice, female students' capabilities and their wellbeing is further developed in a new conceptual map for the Nigeria HE context (in Section 7.3.2), together with the related issues that affect their wellbeing capabilities. Before I present the conceptual map, I highlight in the next section the deficiencies in the capabilities of my research partners and the opportunity to convert their functionings into a form of resistance.

7.3.1 Addressing Deficit Capabilities for Wellbeing

In this section, I discuss the functionings of my research partners in relation to adaptive preferences, agency and deficit capabilities. The issue of adaptive preferences in the UniSEN context was defined in Chapter 2, has been discussed above regarding mental adaptation and was referenced in the previous two chapters. In her work on adaptive preferences and women's empowerment, Khader (2011) posits that many women 'seem to have internalized limiting views about what they were capable of' (p. 2). This seems to be the case at UniSEN, where female students are not enabled to exercise their capabilities for political participation to the level that they desire because they are denied opportunities by the university and the male-dominated SUG. This has led to female students becoming accustomed to what they now refer to as the status quo, as stated in Chapter 5 by the anonymous research partner: *'Na so we see am since and na so e go still be'* [That's the way it's been for us and it will always be so]. I believe that female students need agency to overcome adapted views such as the notion that they have always been and will continue to be prevented from participating in SUG, presidential, faculty or course representative elections. An increase in personal agency and the freedom to exercise their autonomy will enable them to express their own true desires and preferences, develop their confidence towards achieving their capabilities, and result in improved wellbeing (Sen 1992; Odejide, 2007; Robeyns, 2011; Drydyk, 2013).

From Nussbaum's (2000) list of functionings, my research partners' capabilities were particularly deficient in two areas: namely, emotions and practical reason. Having dealt earlier in this chapter with deficiencies around emotional support, I will now address practical reason to elaborate further on adaptive preferences, negotiation of personal agency and the potential from increasing democratic values. Together with the freedom of using senses, imagination and thought, Nussbaum (2000) advocates for practical reason as the ability to 'form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life [including the protection of] the liberty of conscience' (p. 79). The discussion in Chapter 6 on teaching and learning exemplifies this notion in that ineffective pedagogical skills resulted in students' deficiency in critical thought, reasoning and in taking agentic responsibility for their own learning. Translated to this research context therefore, it is my view that female students need to develop the necessary capability for critical thinking, to be able to make reflective

choices for themselves and to be able to engage critically with others. Walker (2019), citing Fricker (2015), also proposes this as an 'epistemic contribution capability… [which] should be taken up in education as a core education freedom' (Walker, 2019 p. 221). This capability would enable female students to use reason and reflexive thought to make sense of everyday life, to ascertain facts and to make meanings of socially constraining conditions in a shared world. Walker's rationale for the necessity of this epistemic contribution capability in education is applicable to the Nigerian HE context where women are disadvantaged because of their gender (Walker, 2019), which further thwarts their capabilities for knowledge building. The epistemic capability of reasoning and critical thinking is necessary for female students to be able to redress their deficit capabilities and gender inequalities. According to Unterhalter (2017), redressing deficit capabilities would consider:

> aspects of agency, particularly, given the history of women's exclusion, subordination and injustice... the autonomy and voice of women... the conditions, associated with political economy and socio-cultural practices that maintain injustices against groups, or classes marked by particular gendered dynamics... some protection of bodily integrity and concern with emotional support. (pp. 9-10)

The functionings of practical reason and criticality may therefore be used by the female students in rebelling against UniSEN's seemingly fixed hierarchical structures and gender divisions, and in favour of their own agentic democracy and self-empowerment. Unterhalter's (2017) statement above also indicates that in addition to practical reasoning and critical thinking, it is possible to reference other deficit capabilities from Nussbaum's (2000) list, such as bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, affiliation, play, and control over one's environment, which operate as collective forms of resistance within the research context to achieve gender justice. Rosignoli (2018) refers to this as a 'resistant capability [as an] issue of collectivity within the capability approach' (p. 813). This will be addressed further in Section 7.4.1 on collective agency.

The next section presents the culmination of the findings from this study in the form of a new conceptual map of PWB. This is developed from the themes raised in the previous chapters and links them to White's (2010) wellbeing dimensions as well as Nussbaum's (2000) list of human capabilities with gender justice.

7.3.2 Towards a New Personal Welfare and Wellbeing Conceptual Map

From answering RQs 1 and 2 in the last two chapters, I suggested that the self or individual is used as a focal point, and so the following themes constitute the wellbeing of female students in the Nigerian context:

Personal *– feelings and emotions (mental health), religion and spirituality, physical (bodily) health and safety.*

In addition, I determined five other contextual dimensions relating to the main elements of the welfare discourse and impact on female students' PWB and capabilities as follows:

Socio-Cultural *– gender biases and expectations, bullying and (verbal and sexual) harassment, a culture of fear.*

Economic *– high cost of living, prostitution (sex work and bodily integrity), fees and banking.*

Academic *– teaching and learning, administrative processes, staff attitudes and behaviours.*

Environmental *– campus infrastructure, accommodation and amenities, accessibility of roads and transportation.*

Political *– staff industrial action, student activism, female participation.*

These contextual influences affect female students' physical and emotional health, academic and life goals, behaviour and attitude, personal agency, and their individual ability to overcome the challenges of gender injustice – in other words, their capabilities for a good quality of life. Drawing therefore from the above-mentioned findings, White's (2010) SWB and Nussbaum's (2000) human capabilities, a new PWB conceptual map (see Diagram 7.1) has been developed. For example, White's SWB theoretical framework in Chapter 2 comprises the subjective, material and relational dimensions. I synthesised the concepts with these dimensions with some of the above-mentioned PWB contextual elements as follows:

Subjective - people's perceptions of their positions, ideologies and beliefs → *Personal*

Relational - social relations, access to public goods, human capabilities, attitudes to life, political identities → *Socio-Cultural, Academic, Environmental, Personal, Political*

Material - assets, welfare, standards of living → *Economic, Environmental*

The preferred term of '*conceptual map*' is referred to by Rallis and Rossman (2012) as the 'beginnings of a roadmap that could guide further explorations' (p. 87) of the topics being discussed, even in other contexts and groups that are similar to the one in this study.

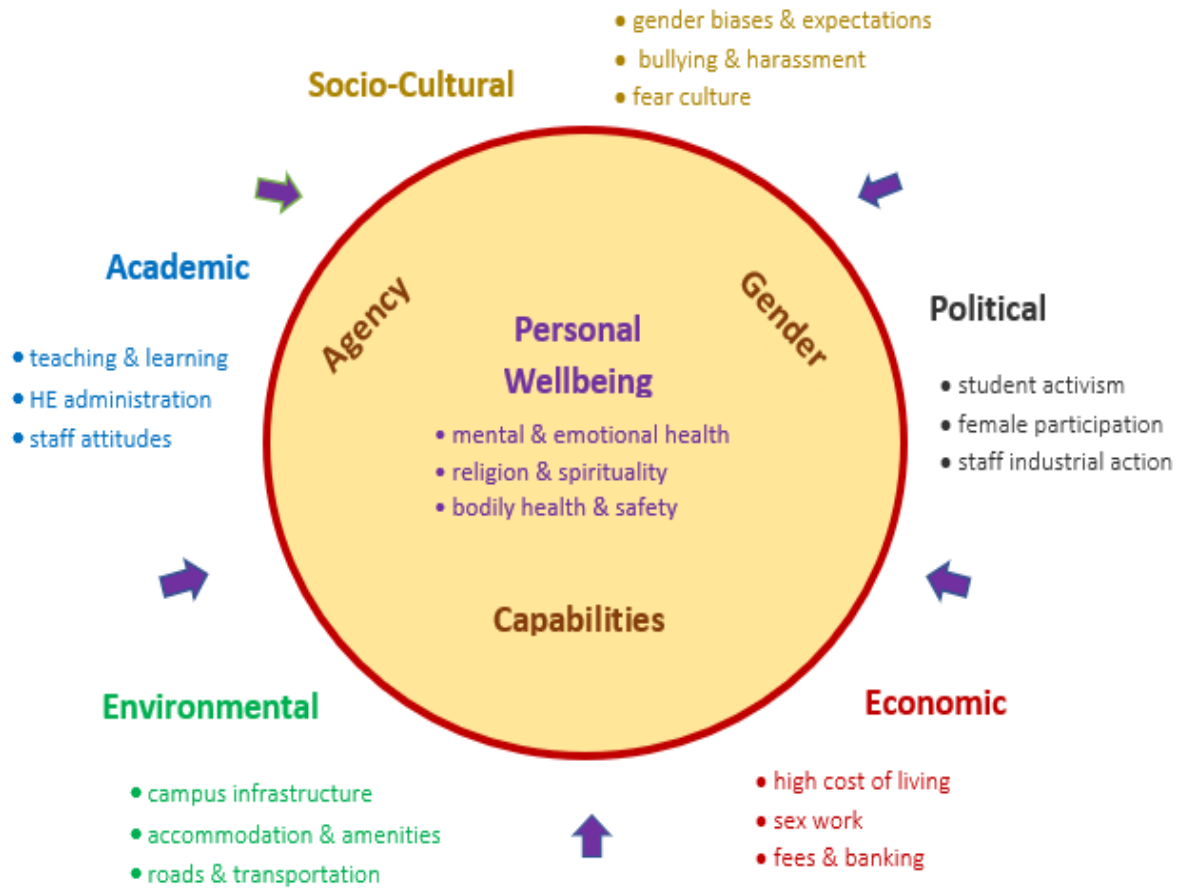


Diagram 7.1: New Personal Welfare and Wellbeing conceptual map

At the centre of the diagram is the personal – the inner aspects of the female student, including the agency and the capabilities that she may or may not possess as a result of her gender, hence these are connected with her wellbeing. For instance, this study highlighted the absence of six functionings from Nussbaum's (2000) list of central human capabilities that hinder the female undergraduate students from attaining a good quality of life within the Nigerian HE context. These include bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, affiliation, play, and control over one's environment. As we will address in the next section,

there are contextual issues that thwart their personal agency in these areas. The other two functionings from Nussbaum's list – emotions and practical reason – have been discussed in the sections above on mental wellbeing and deficit capabilities.

Surrounding the circle are the five external welfare dimensions (as listed above) – the aspects of context that may constrain or expand the female student's agency and capabilities. According to White's (2010) SWB framework, there exists a co-dependent and interconnected relationship between three wellbeing dimensions – the subjective, material and relational (see Section 2.2.3). The new map supports White's material and relational dimensions in comparing female students' standards of living and the quality of their physical environment. These dimensions are re-categorised in this study as environmental and economic dimensions. For the subjective, White's references to one's personality, scope for influence and religious faith are also acknowledged in this context.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural, economic, academic and political dimensions portray the ways in which power structures within Nigerian HEIs and the wider society prohibits gender justice, for example in the way female students are addressed, treated, disadvantaged and marginalised. According to Loots and Walker (2015), some valued functionings that challenge gender inequalities in HE include female students being treated with dignity and having a voice through participation and representation.

The re-conceptualised map therefore integrates the theoretical frameworks of SWB and capabilities with gender justice, as well as the empirical findings that include five dimensions – socio-cultural, academic, environmental, political and economic – that influence the PWB of female undergraduate students in Nigeria. This map represents the contribution to knowledge from this study in highlighting that the complex interaction between a female undergraduate student's intrinsic self and the extrinsic aspects of her lived context, forms her personal welfare and wellbeing capabilities.

Argument three: The personal wellbeing of female students is influenced by numerous external welfare factors that are specific to the Nigerian HE context.

7.4 The Personal is Political

I found Africa in the struggle…
The struggle for relevance in a world obsessed with power.
A Nigeria where to be young and female is to strip you of autonomy.

(Foluke Adebisi 2017, 'Finding My Africa, Finding Myself')

Before exploring the issue of collective agency through the collective capabilities of female students in the Nigerian context, I propose one final argument. Since PWB involves a deeper sense of self, the challenge for female students is to balance their conflicting personal values with external factors such as the academic culture, patriarchal society, political nuances and the wider systemic failures. Although it was ascertained in Section 2.2.1 that Nigeria is a collectivist society where communal interests are prioritised over individual, I have suggested that for the voices of female students to be heard, it is necessary to develop their autonomy, self-esteem, agency, self-care and capabilities. I argue that because collectivist societies are prone to looking out for one another and to sharing communal belongings and activities, this tends to place often unrealistic expectations on some individuals. They are then seen as selfish or made to feel guilty about taking time out to care for their own wellbeing. In Igboland, this is known as *igbalu aka* [spreading one's hands outwards in continuous giving until the hands are empty]. White (2015) alludes to this in her approach to relational wellbeing in the Global South as contextually different from SWB in the Global North.

Taking the Ubuntu philosophy for example, with the meanings ascribed to it – humanism, individuality within community and humaneness (Le Roux, 2000; Venter, 2004; Jolley, 2010) – I would infer that the wellbeing of an individual is essential to that of the group of which the person is a part. Based on my findings therefore, it is the PWB of the individual female student that needs to be developed before she can then be integrated into a formal group (Hofstede, 2011). Agreeing with this idea, White's (2015) attempt to establish wellbeing as a relational process, identifies the personal (including increasing one's own emotional self-satisfaction) as a first indicator before the societal. This would result in a two-way effect by enhancing one's PWB as well as impacting positively on others in her environment, as implied by Hanisch's (1969) essay 'The personal is the political' (see Chapter 1). Empowering and developing the self (the personal) enables and supports transformative peer and group

action (the political). As Atkinson et al (2019) posit 'the relationship between subjective [personal, individual] and community [group, political] wellbeing that is dominant in policy and practice is dependent on a particular, albeit implicit, understanding of the self' (p. 2). Personal development, self-understanding and increased agency enable an individual to act on their values, thereby leading to the capability to exert control over one's environment and for public participation.

Argument four: It is essential to empower and develop the female student's personal wellbeing, human capabilities and agency as well as establishing collective action as the two co-evolve together.

7.4.1 Collective Agency

Although the capability approach (CA) has been of adequate use in this study to assess and recognise the need for personal wellbeing, in Chapter 2, I presented critiques which label it as overly individualist and led scholars like Ibrahim (2006) and Rosignoli (2018) to propose a shift of focus from individual to collective capabilities. In Chapter 5, my research partners also indicate that their informal social networks seem to be working well as they continue to support each other where needed. As Kelechi opined, 'our guidance and counselling here is non-existent. So we just advise ourselves. *Nke anyi g'eme nwu, anyi emee* [We just do whatever we can for ourselves]' (see Section 5.4.2). She stated further that 'as friends, we advise each other here, no miscommunication. We have all been through this so no vexing, speak it out'. I view this peer support as a coping mechanism that female students use as they face their daily challenges. Given the minimal personal agency and deficit capabilities that they currently have, I would advocate for establishing more formalised group platforms for participation and empowerment. The benefits of powerful collective action or voices have been highlighted in raising awareness of women's issues, to promote gender equality and equity and to influence development. From the findings, it is apparent to me as an outsider that there are existing gender challenges which the institution denies or ignores (see interview with ASUU Chairman in Section 6.4.2), and discriminatory practices against the female students which need to be addressed. According to the 2012 World Development Report:

> The ability to challenge the status quo and increase individual agency of women also depends on women's ability to speak collectively. Challenging existing

> institutions and social norms requires voices that speak in favor of greater gender equality, including the voices of women. (World Bank, 2011 p. 176)

Collective capabilities are described as not just an amalgamation of individual capabilities but also those that can be used through social interaction to achieve group or community changes (Ibrahim, 2006). For female students in education, this would involve exercising one's agency in co-operation with others, taking advantage of appropriate opportunities and learning processes not only for their own wellbeing (as above, the personal) but also for democratic participation (the political) (Sen, 1999; Walker and Unterhalter, 2007). In Chapter 9, I will recommend some strategies and opportunities which can be used for collective action by female students through their collective capabilities, including setting up a formal female students' network.

Summary

This chapter highlighted the following four arguments: the necessity of a move in terminology from subjective to personal wellbeing as applicable to female students in the Nigerian research context; the need for mental health awareness, discourse and services as an integral part of personal wellbeing; the influence of several welfare factors in the Nigerian higher education institutional culture on the personal wellbeing of female students; and the importance of self-development and personal empowerment as well as collective agency and action. The chapter has also re-conceptualised the wellbeing of female undergraduate students in Nigeria from the preceding research findings, in line with their contextual capabilities and gender justice. The issues of adaptive preferences, deficit capabilities and agency (both personal and collective) were also discussed in relation to the identified functionings of the female students. In addition to the four arguments, a new personal welfare and wellbeing map was developed as a contribution to knowledge.

In the chapter that follows, I will outline some systemic and institutional recommendations for supporting the wellbeing of female students in Nigerian HEIs, as well as the implications for policy, theory and further research. This is crucial because the female students cannot achieve the desired wellbeing outcomes by themselves. Part of the responsibility for development lies

with the university authorities, stakeholders and the wider society, as encapsulated by the following quote:

> *Self-care is good. But it's not enough in the face of systemic issues.*
> *(Prof. M. Duffy, 2019, personal communication, 2nd April)*

-8- Supporting Female Students' Wellbeing

Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways;
the point is to change it.
(Karl Marx 1845, 'Theses on Feuerbach')

Overview

This chapter addresses the ways in which the wellbeing capabilities of my research partners and other female undergraduate students in Nigeria can be supported, in relation to the critical aspects and arguments from the last three chapters. As there are implications for different stakeholders, the chapter draws from wider international research literature.

The chapter is structured into four sections. I first give recommendations for *theory* through the decolonising women in a postcolonial context; second, for *policy* in Nigerian higher education institutions and the wider country context frameworks, in particular for gender justice and for mental health; third, for *practice* concerning UniSEN's institutional processes; and fourth, for *further research*. It is worth noting that the recommendations may be used in three ways: working within existing patriarchal structures, restructuring and/or reforming them.

8.1 Decolonising Women in a Postcolonial African Context

This section includes mainly theoretical recommendations which also affect policy and practice. As discussed in earlier chapters, the influences of colonialism, internationalisation and globalisation on Nigeria and within her educational institutions indicate that there are underlying structures of patriarchal power that lead to the control and domination of people, resources and opportunities (Olarewaju, 2018). Hence, some international scholars and HEIs have increasingly attempted to deconstruct the colonial effects in education (see also Section 2.5 which included the distinction between decolonisation and decoloniality).

Decolonising approaches include:

- 're-appropriating culture and indigeneity' in Africa (Adebisi 2016, p. 433),

- addressing issues of gender, race and class through inclusion of more diverse literature in United Kingdom-based curricula (Gopal, 2017),

- encouraging student-led campaigns in South Africa such as 'Rhodes Must Fall' to raise awareness of inequality and structural injustices against students and for the inclusion of student voice (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Shay, 2016; Dundoo, 2019).

While Alahira (2014) highlights the need to decolonise the way African women are studied, Motlafi (2016) further suggests that feminist methodologies on the African continent are decolonised in a bid to confront and resist Western and other forms of thought 'in the articulation and theorisation of black women's experiences of oppression' (para. 2; see also Section 4.2.2 on the postcolonial feminist perspective). However, it is Nkenkana (2015) who defines decolonised African women as liberated from the oppression of 'the patriarchal, colonial and imperial modern system/s [that they] seek to reject' (p. 41). From the afore-mentioned approaches therefore, I would argue that decolonising women is an important recommendation for contexts that still suffer from the legacies of colonial rule.

Similar to that of coloniality, Sithole (2014) describes three types of decolonial perspective[s] as *power*, *knowledge* and *being*. He further cites Quijano (2007) who theorises that colonial power is the 'genesis of the domination of power… [that create] forces of social domination and discrimination' (Sithole 2014, p. 59), which include patriarchy. As discussed in Section 3.1.1, patriarchy is linked to colonialism in the way that men dominate women in society, which then perpetuates gender inequalities and an imbalance of power between the sexes. Just as postcolonial scholarship critiques *power* linked to the male gender and challenges Western and Eurocentric *knowledge*, this study is also concerned with the decolonising of *being*. Maldonado-Torres (2007) describes the coloniality of being as addressing colonial effects on both the lived experiences and minds of people. A colonised mind or mentality is generally understood to result from the psychological impact of colonialism on the colonised (Oelofsen 2015). I discussed in preceding chapters how female undergraduate students continually face gender discrimination, stereotyping and injustice often due to patriarchal traditions, however they appear to be unaware of or powerless to exercise any agency to improve their conditions.

Given the enduring impact of colonialism on the minds, mentality and practices of people in African societies, the decoloniality of *power* would help in deconstructing gender hierarchies and reduce power differentials in contextual interactions. The decoloniality of *being* can be used to set female students on a journey towards mental liberation from dehumanising experiences and to develop their agentic capabilities for wellbeing (to be discussed further in Chapter 9).

In advocating for the decoloniality of women therefore, I suggest a two-fold approach of *emancipation* and *empowerment*[64]. Emancipation would first mean a dismantling of the societal, institutional structures and individual colonial relationships that dominate and oppress female students. I explained in Chapters 1 and 3 that these structures and relationships often stem from both the colonial legacies and the patriarchal beliefs of the people. Empowerment then enables the young women to take back and own their power as well as exercise their agency. As discussed in the two preceding chapters, this approach would involve a serious attempt to implement the policies that guide affirmative action with leaders and communities of women and men working together. Other decolonial strategies recommended are to ascertain the epistemic struggles of women and de-silence their voices; to give female students autonomy and equal access in political and other spaces; and to consistently tackle violence against women by identifying and punishing perpetrators (Adebisi, 2016; Murunga, 2017).

In a quote[65] cited in Chapter 1, the senior official at UniSEN reiterates a cultural bias through the misrecognition of female students as equal to their male peers (Fraser, 2007). Fraser further asserts that these inequalities can be overcome by the 'dismantling [of] institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on par with others as full partners in social interaction' (Fraser, 2008 p. 16). Decolonising female students would therefore also involve decolonising the mind, that is a systemic change in peoples' mindset and

[64] According to the Cambridge University Press (2019a), *emancipation* is the act or process of giving a person social, political or economic freedom and rights (para. 1); whereas *empowerment* is 'the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you' (ibid, 2019b para. 1).

[65] 'The [senior official of the institution] in his remark also buttressed the need for students of the University to get committed to their studies, as this he said, is the basis for being in the University. He further advised female students of the University to live an upright and responsible life.' (UniSEN Bulletin, 2016)

perceptions in recognising the value of individuals at the institution and treating all students as equal stakeholders in education (Calitz, 2016).

8.2 Nigerian Higher Education and National Policies

> A more truly gender-responsive culture would be characterised by gender equity in access, redressing structural barriers that influence the access and participation of both sexes, and women's active role in decision-making in the management and administration of higher education. (Endeley and Ngaling, 2007 p. 65)

Similar to the previous section, this section includes suggestions for policy which also impacts practice. The problems that were identified in this area from Chapters 5 and 6 include the negative treatment of women in HE leading to a dysfunctional culture in academia and politics, gender biases and expectations linked to patriarchy, and the bullying and harassment of female students. Also considered were some wider national systemic issues including the Remita financial system, and intermittent industrial action by HE staff.

Regarding gender discrimination, the international agreements that have been ratified by Nigeria should be reviewed for implementation at HE level. These include CEDAW, the MDGs and SDGs, and the Rights of Women in Africa; as well as the Nigeria National Gender Policy (Federal Ministry of Nigeria, 2006) – see Sections 3.2 and 3.3. This will not only support human rights and development but also ensure equity between the sexes in academic, political, health and social pursuits. Furthermore, some patriarchal and traditional practices in African societies continue to threaten the wellbeing and agency of women; for example, the issue of male dominance in the home and family that has filtered into public spaces and professional institutions (Anele, 2010) needs to be contested. As Mama (2006) posits,

> Gender transformations involve intellectual and cultural struggles and contestations. The everyday manifestation of this can be seen every time a move towards some level of redistribution - of gender justice - is greeted with shouts about culture and tradition being interfered with. These shouts are often visceral, rather than thoughtful reactions to change. (pp. 56-57)

HEIs in Nigeria must therefore be able to effect changes to protect women within their campuses. For example, following the recent 'Sex for Grades' (BBC News Africa, 2019)

documentary discussed in Section 5.4.2, a few universities have increased efforts to address issues of bullying, harassment and coercion by lecturers, as well as cultism (Omar, 2019). However, more needs to be done, therefore, possible actions will be suggested below and in the following section on *Gender Justice and Equity*.

There also need to be tighter laws and more serious repercussions for acts of sexual harassment and violence more broadly in Nigeria. As discussed in Chapter 5, despite the national legislature's approval of the Bill to punish and prohibit lecturers who sexually harass students (Itodo, 2016), its execution has been slow and relatively minimal to be of much effect. I recommend that the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, State counterparts, and other organisations in Nigeria that deal with gender-based violence such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Project Alert on Violence Against Women aim to popularise this bill (Philanthropy Circuit, 2017; NOVO Foundation, 2018). Doing so will promote the call for the decolonialisation of women in Nigeria, as addressed in the last section.

The following recommendations affect all students in Federal universities, but they are included here because of the physical, academic and mental stress inflicted on female students, as narrated in the findings chapters. The intermittent strike action by HE staff unions (ASUU, NASU, etc.), and related nationwide conflicts with the Federal Government, need to be dealt with because they result in an epileptic academic calendar and are a setback for students' learning and graduation. Both parties need to keep their part of the agreements to avoid extended absences for staff and students in HEIs. In addition, the use of identification numbers generated for each banking transaction by the national Remita financial system is a convoluted and time-wasting process for most users. As discussed in Section 6.3.1, time is again wasted with the issuance of several forms of identification, each to suit different purposes. I would therefore suggest a review or update of these systems whereby one reference number or identification, for instance the national ID card produced by a national computerised data system, is used to cover all financial payments. This will ease the burden for paying the numerous fees and dues required of students, remove archaic administrative processes, and support the streamlining of administration processes in universities and other educational settings (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009; Yusuf, 2012; Aigheyisi and Obhiosa, 2014).

The section to follow suggests some ways to remedy institutional biases against women and to promote gender justice, including some that have been previously mentioned.

8.2.1 Gender Justice and Equity

> While the individual may feel powerless to effect a change, the institution can restructure its policies and processes to establish gender equality. This might be a painful evolution for a deeply masculine institution, since it will have to make deep "institutional, pedagogical and epistemological" changes (Mama, 2003: 105) in order to discard the restrictive social roles ascribed to females in what should be a transformative environment. (Odejide 2007, pp. 55-56)

The quote above reiterates that despite society's patriarchal influences, the onus lies within institutions of learning to provide spaces that bring about positive change for young people. This recommendation therefore is for universities to first acknowledge their role in perpetuating gender bias as institutions that are situated within and are defined by a society's 'systems, structures, norms and values' (Endeley and Ngaling, 2007 p. 66). As mentioned in the previous section, HEIs need to commit to the protection of women, including the wellbeing capabilities and progress of female students, and safeguard against society's patriarchal cultures and traditions which are harmful, continuous and deeply entrenched (Walker, 2003; see also Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). This can be done by establishing a gender policy that will not only promote capabilities but also challenge gender stereotypes and educate all university stakeholders (including teaching and non-teaching staff, students and learners, parents/carers and visitors) on the principles of gender justice, inclusivity and equity (Walker, 2003; Alkire and Deneulin, 2009). A relevant gender policy could also support the recommendation made in Section 8.1 to decolonise knowledge, power and being, not just in relation to African women but also to ensure a form of curricular justice in HEIs (see also Section 8.3.1). Connell (1992) refers to curricular justice as a way of reviewing social justice through the practice of the curriculum in education. She further suggests the following three principles to support curricular justice: (i) participation and inclusion, for example, 'curricula which include and validate the experiences of women as well as men' (Ibid, p. 139); (ii) benefits for the disadvantaged, for instance, the importance of developing programmes for girls; (iii) the reproductive process of equality in social relationships within education.

Although Nigeria has a national gender policy in situ (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006), for the policy to specifically enhance the capabilities of women in HE for gender equity, its objectives must still be implemented in practice, as Walker (2017) posits:

> Gendered norms and practices in higher education, influence women's experiences of higher education and their identities even as higher education also enables greater opportunities for women. These gendered disadvantages are not captured in the parity of numbers. A national gender equality policy is required which rather advances capabilities as the informational basis of gender justice. (p. 3)

An institutional gender policy is not a novel concept and I therefore draw from the work of several scholars to cover the five main areas in Table 7.1; particularly Enderley and Ngaling (2007, pp. 67-68), Alkire and Deneulin (2009, pp. 29-30); as well as Jackson (1997), Morley et al (2006), Murrell (2006), Para-Mallam (2010). Also included are suggestions for 'a capability-friendly policy for gender equality… according to the participants' valued functionings' (Loots and Walker, 2015 p. 371). I would recommend that for a university such as UniSEN that does not have an existing gender policy, most of the suggested criteria in this table can be prioritised on a short, medium and long-term basis, as applicable. An excerpt from such a gender policy obtained from the Uganda's University of Makarere is attached as Appendix X.

Equity	• Acknowledge and respect women's rights • Allocate resources fairly to ensure improved comparable access to opportunities for male and female students • Mainstream gender in policies, practice, governance, administration and in pedagogies to ensure curriculum justice • Acknowledge gender differences and their intersection with health, disability, tribe and socio-economic backgrounds • Involve women in decision-making processes, support their autonomy and enable practical reasoning through critique and critical thinking • Recognise, challenge and eliminate existing gender discrimination, biases and expectations in institutional policies, rules, regulations and practices
Empowerment	• Ensure diversity, affirmative action, education and awareness of women's rights and status in programmes and resources • Encourage gendered collective action, for instance in setting up female student networks on campus, and women mentorship programmes (either peer-led or between female staff and students) to achieve the functioning of affiliation • Appoint staff at department or faculty levels to be responsible for dealing with issues of equality, diversity and inclusion • Provide grants and funding streams for gender-based activities • Enable and enhance the capabilities of women and female students
Co-operation	• Train staff in the promotion of gender-inclusive language, attitudes, behaviours and communications • Recruit male stakeholders who support gender justice to engage with others in disseminating the message and strategy for a gender-inclusive culture, for example 'The Male Champions of Change'[66]
Security	• Establish and implement firm guidelines on dealing with complaints and grievances such as sexual harassment and violence to ensure the female students' bodily integrity and emotions • Ensure safety in learning and living environments, for example adequate lighting and protection from cult activities
Sustainability	• Plan strategic gender audits and performance indicators • Provide guidance, counselling and pastoral services to meet the needs of the different sexes; as well as the individual emotional and social needs of female students to develop their senses, imagination, and thought • Consolidate established gains for example, the appointment and promotion of female staff to higher positions • Provide training on gender mainstreaming, personal development and leadership skills for students • Include African and postcolonial feminist pedagogies such as women and gender studies in the curriculum • Ensure that strategies for regular monitoring and evaluation of all the above are implemented to ensure effectiveness and impact

Table 7.1: Recommendations for Gender Policies in HEIs

[66] 'The Male Champions of Change strategy is about male leaders advocating for and acting to advance gender equality' (Broderick, 2019 para. 2).

8.3 UniSEN's Procedures and Processes

Although the recommendations in this section refer mainly to UniSEN as the case study institution, it must be noted that they can be extended to tertiary institutions in Nigeria (particularly Federal universities) and to other HEIs in SSA and internationally where female students experience similar challenges).

Citing Escriver[67] (1974), Utomi (2016, para. 16) posits:

> A university must play a primary role in contribution to human progress. Since the problems facing mankind are multiple and complex (spiritual, cultural, social, financial etc.), university education must cover all these aspects.

In line with this understanding of university education, the preceding chapters identified several gaps between policy and practice at UniSEN that diminish the welfare of female students, including poor pedagogical practices, lack of support for their emotional needs, environmental systemic failures (e.g. Medicals), anti-cult abuse of powers, unconducive lecture rooms, and inaccessible roads and transportation. More notable was the absence of mental health policies, and processes for student engagement and empowerment. Suggested solutions in this section cover the following areas: teaching and learning; communication of information, advice and student counselling; the institutional environment; and strategies for partnerships with students.

It should be noted that while making the recommendations in this section, I attempted to separate the wellbeing capabilities of female undergraduate students from the rest of the student population through the following questions:

> The capability approach offers a useful perspective on education by teaching us to evaluate learning opportunities, processes and outcomes. It asks questions such as: are valued capabilities distributed fairly and equally in and through education? Do some people get more opportunities to convert their resources into capabilities than others? Which capabilities matter most when it comes to developing agency and autonomy for educational opportunities, social connection and valued dimensions of living? (Unterhalter, 2009 p. 221)

[67] Jesemaria Escriver was a Spanish Priest and former Chancellor of the University of Navarra, Spain.

8.3.1 Critical Transformative Pedagogy

> The "dialogical man" is critical and knows that although it is within the power of humans to create and transform, in a concrete situation of alienation individuals may be impaired in the use of that power. (Freire, 2005 p. 91)

In response to my research partners' critiques of teaching and learning practices in Chapter 6 and my discussion in Chapter 7 on critical thinking skills as a deficit capability, this section details suggestions for the improvement of pedagogy. To do this, I first unpack Freire's quote (presented above) through my contextual understanding of the 'dialogical man' referring to both teacher (lecturer) and learner (student) who can collaboratively discern knowledge, with neither party limited by the other's power. The power imbalances at UniSEN, and the failure of some lecturers to produce these creative or transformative spaces for students' critical learning and engagement denies them of their academic freedom (Macfarlane, 2012) and their functionings or 'valued ways of being and thinking' (Calitz, 2016 p. 36). This therefore necessitates a transformative [re]structuring of critical pedagogy[68] at UniSEN.

In addition, point 61 of the Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) states that 'All teachers in tertiary institutions shall be required to undergo training in the methods and techniques of teaching' (p. 37). The minimum requirement is for HEI lecturers to have a doctoral degree, although the National Universities Commission revealed that as of 2017 only around 60% of lecturing staff had obtained this qualification (Ebhomele, 2017; Fatunde, 2008). This means that even when they have subject knowledge, lecturers may still lack the critical pedagogical skills needed for effective teaching of the curriculum. I therefore recommend that UniSEN staff with teaching and supervision workloads should not only obtain the required training in teaching techniques, but they should also be given opportunities to attend academically relevant seminars and conferences. This would involve identifying inadequacies in the current standards of teaching and learning, and lead to a strong pedagogical background that will ultimately be of benefit to students. Calitz (2016) opines that

[68] Although there are several definitions, I draw from Breuing's (2011) research on 'problematizing critical pedagogy' that it 'provides a theoretical foundation for students to evaluate their social, political, and economic standing… allows students to question societal norms and how these norms perpetuate societal injustices… critical reflection and action… involves the outside world and transformation, asserting the importance of activism' (p. 11).

'transformative teaching and learning in higher education should disrupt unjust practices within pedagogy, institutional structures, and within the embedded power relations between staff and students' (p. 21). This requires training courses in critical pedagogies (for example, reflective practices, understanding and applying different learning styles and processes and engaging students in critical thinking and writing skills), ethical teaching responsibilities, and respect for students' rights to learning to readdress socially unjust issues in Nigerian HEIs.

As discussed also in Section 3.2.1, UNESCO's (2003) Equality Report suggests that an improved quality of education often depends on the quality and gender balance of teachers, leading to gender parity and equal opportunities for staff as well as students. This therefore means that critical pedagogical training courses would give female lecturers the opportunity to develop their own capabilities and could lead to better academic outcomes for female students. It could support an understanding of curricular justice as decolonising knowledge through the curriculum and simultaneously including gender-friendly and equitable content, a shift that requires female teacher involvement – as indicated in Section 8.2.1 by Connell (1992). In addition, it would contribute to dismantling the gender stereotypical assumptions that women are not interested in STEM courses (Yusuff, 2014), while providing students such as Marian with role models to encourage her aspiration to become a 'good Mathematics teacher' (see *Whose Voices?* In Chapter 5).

Capable lecturers who are nominated by students should be recognised at excellence awards ceremonies. Lecturers who do not seek their own personal interests in grading students but give merited marks should also be commended, as this would also curtail the problems of 'sorting' (see Section 5.4.2) by students. Apart from academic skills development, there should be compulsory personal and professional development training for UniSEN staff on ethical behaviours to ensure that students are not at risk of harmful practices, such as setting boundaries, use of technology and social media, addictions, violence and abuse, to name a few (Zarra, 2016). Some of these will be addressed in the next section.

8.3.2 Information, Advice and Guidance

This section deals with the challenges around current provision of academic advising and counselling services as well as other organisational communication strategies at UniSEN. The importance of 'pastoral services e.g. counselling and welfare and via the curriculum and pedagogy' (Morley et al 2006, p. xiv) cannot be overemphasized in the Nigerian HE context. UniSEN claims to assign each new student to an academic adviser within the departments – a lecturer whose duty is to provide academic and personal counselling to the student (UniSEN General and Academic Regulations, 2014). Given the existing nonchalant attitude of most lecturers in meeting their responsibilities to students, coupled with the redundant services at the G&C centre, the formal counselling and welfare system needs to be improved. From their study on access to counselling services at a similar Nigerian HEI, Adubale and Aluede (2019) show that the foremost concerns raised by students seeking support are academic and emotional. I therefore suggest that UniSEN draws from the non-academic staff pool and provides adequate training and qualifications to enable efficient personal tutoring to students. Similarly, the current practice of informal communication between staff and students needs to be addressed and the staff members must be made aware of the impact of verbal abuse and assault particularly on the mental health and wellbeing of female students. For example, verbal and written information from staff should conveyed in a collegial manner instead of suggesting power over the students or their opinions (C. Bovill, 2019, personal communication, 8th March).

Furthermore, there should be a clear commitment from UniSEN to investigate and sanction lecturers and non-academic staff, including campus security staff, who are found guilty of verbal and/or sexual harassment (discussed extensively in Sections 5.4.2, 5.4.4, 6.2, 6.3.3 and 7.2). A professional code of conduct and grievance procedures should be established and staff required to abide by these or face serious consequences. In addition, a working system needs to be implemented and communicated to enable female students to report cases of harassment without repercussions. This would give them the confidence and opportunity to challenge unfair and prejudiced behaviours and attitudes targeted at them (Morley et al, 2006). It is possible that the SUG could have a role in facilitating this, so long as it is given the autonomy to act fairly and consistently on behalf of the students, without being controlled by the university authorities.

The orientation seminars organised by the Student Affairs department for new students must include information on how and where to readily access G&C support and this service needs to be revamped with staffing and resources that work efficiently. Most importantly, the system should include a mental health and wellbeing policy for students which outlines the process for institutional disclosure, gives information relating to available interventions for stress management, and raises awareness of mental health issues (Robotham, 2008; Yaw, 2019). Although some of these are included in the University of Cape Town's Student Mental Health Policy 2018 (see Appendix XI for its table of contents), I argue that it does not adequately cover the full wellbeing services that ought to be provided to students. This is particularly essential for female students who may need more emotional support regarding issues such as teenage pregnancies, sexual harassment, menstrual hygiene, bodily integrity and safety, self-development and even mentoring advice on leadership skills, to name a few.

Regarding the dissemination of formal information, UniSEN's methods of communication with students needs to be improved through direct signposting, for example by deploying relevant information technology systems and student-related software. Rather than utilising the existing means of communicating important information at redundant bus stands, broken noticeboards in lecture rooms, and word of mouth through student reps (see Section 6.3.4), I would suggest that the university utilises programme planning structures such as online formal educational platforms. However, this must be affordable enough for the students to access as part of their current technology usage.

8.3.3 The Institutional Environment

From the findings, there are several suggestions to be made for improvements in the institutional environment, which were alluded to in Chapter 6. These suggestions cover the campus infrastructure, accommodation and amenities, and accessibility of roads/transportation. As major improvements may require vast amounts of funds, this section will recommend the increased efficient use of currently available resources to maximise the opportunity freedoms of the female students (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009).

Within the campus, improved environmental wellbeing should focus on the refurbishment of existing classrooms and the completion of existing building projects rather than starting new ones (see Section 6.1.1). The proximity of classrooms within departments will minimise the need to travel between distant campus locations and, particularly for female students, it will reduce the overcrowded conditions that cause hardship to their physical capabilities. Given that the physiology of most men enables them to more agile and to move around quicker (Adesina, 2016), they are likely to arrive at rescheduled lectures earlier. The completed classrooms/departments would mean that female students get to lectures in a less tired state of mind and body, thereby aiding their intellectual functionings. As one of my research partners concluded, a ventilated, spacious and comfortable lecture hall would make learning less tedious and enable easy assimilation.

Secondly, my research partners' discussions on the current allocation of departmental facilities indicate that a review may be necessary to ensure a fair redistribution of resources across faculties and departments for equitable access to education. This is particularly applicable as I write this chapter (May 2019), given that a new VC and leadership team will commence their tenure within the next month, and would ensure continuity of leadership planning and vision (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009). Similarly, the refurbishment of classrooms could include the repainting of walls; removing the curtains and fixing all defunct facilities (such as providing fans for better ventilation, along with clocks and audio-visual equipment that work), and implementing regular cleaning and maintenance arrangements to provide a comfortable space conducive for students' learning capabilities and to improve academic performance (Alani et al, 2010).

Externally, multiple health hazards were linked to Ivenso Road given its proximity to some departments on campus as well as off-campus hostels. I suggest that to reduce noise pollution in this area, the marketers and transporters are banned from operating in the section of the road closest to the school gate except for a few who must be licensed. This would also minimise the risks on bodily safety faced by female students who must return to their Ivenso hostels at night-time because they had to stay on campus to study in a noise-free environment until a late hour. Likewise, it would be preferable for UniSEN to increase their on-campus hostel provision as those hostels seem to be more conducive for female students' security and concentration and are therefore more beneficial to wellbeing (Muslim et al, 2012; see also

Section 6.1.2). If the construction of new hostels is not a financially viable option at present, the Student Affairs department should assume more responsibility in registering, monitoring and dealing with hostel landlords on behalf of students, particularly to safeguard female students from continuous harassment for rent payments. Part of this service may include contractual agreements to the effect that basic amenities are provided, including fully working generators (for the erratic electricity supply), safe water sources, waste disposal facilities (especially for menstrual products), and transparent rent payment structures. This would ensure that the rights of female students are protected through the advocacy of the Student Affairs department, and would result in curtailing the threating and abusive powers of anti-cult groups[69]. Solving these issues would not only improve justice issues or their quality of life, but also increase UniSEN's efficiency as a public value of the students. Robeyns (2016b) describes this in her work on 'Capabilitarianism':

> This is not merely about justice or comparative quality of life research; rather, it is about the assessment of institutions and practices based on one or several public values that are conceptualized in capability terms. (p. 399)

Regarding the damaged roads and related increases in transportation fees (addressed in Section 6.1.3), it is incumbent on the university authorities to continue to partner with and urge the state government to repair the bad roads ahead of the annual rainy season. The provision of good roads is essential for students to be able to access their lectures and to prevent water-borne diseases that have a negative impact on the physical health and wellbeing especially for women. As above, only licensed and registered transport services should be available for students' use, and there should be a financial cap on costs for travel to all areas within the university premises, to ensure affordability for all students, female or male.

For cases of ill-health, the wellbeing of female students is thwarted by the poor conditions, lack of resources and inadequate staffing levels at the medical centre. I therefore believe that UniSEN should focus urgently on rehabilitating the medical facilities to a sustainable and

[69] As discussed in Chapter 6, the anti-cult group was established in to curtail the activities of campus cultists (Ajayi et al, 2010 p. 158), but have since become an ominous surveillance body that preys on female students.

efficient level (as detailed in the Handbook; see also Section 6.3.2). Good health for female students is important to enable them to reach their full physical and academic capabilities.

8.3.4 Student Engagement

The final recommendation to be made to UniSEN is in the area of student engagement, participation and empowerment. The involvement of students in certain areas of HEI governance would help to create more balanced power relations in the academic and political spheres, and lead to a socially just environment. This commitment from the institution will show the students that they are valued members of the university community whose voices are heard and well represented. For instance, one advantage of including a transformative pedagogy in the curriculum is that it is based on three principles: 'to strive for egalitarian relationships in the classroom; to try to make all students feel valued as individuals; and to use the experience of students as a learning resource in order to bring about social transformation' (Endeley and Ngaling, 2007 p. 66). I therefore suggest that student engagement be carried out in the following three areas – at UniSEN's leadership level, through empowerment of the SUG, and with student involvement as co-producers of knowledge.

Engagement at Leadership Level

In this area, I would suggest that the university allocates one seat on the governing board to a student who will apply to volunteer as a representative of the student body. The student can be appointed on an annual or biennial basis, to be involved in the decision-making process and gather the views of students on issues that concern them. This would ensure that the students become aware and a part of delivering the vision of the university. Similarly, there should be a nominated official on the university's governing body with responsibility for student wellbeing and/or gender equality. This would ensure that these issues are reflected in the institution's plans and indicators.

Another practical way for the university to involve students is to recruit them as reviewers on a faculty or departmental level, working in partnership with staff. This would involve teams that visit other faculties/departments and report annually on good quality teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment practices, which could then be recommended to and/or

replicated in their own faculty/department. Student reviewers would receive training for the role, develop problem-solving and research skills, and understand how academia works.

Engagement through Empowerment

Secondly, given the relationship that ASUU has with the SUG (deduced from our interview with the ASUU Chairman in Chapters 5 and 6), I recommend that ASUU members should be able to lead by example, offer mentoring opportunities to the SUG and be accessible to support the needs of the student body. One way in which this could be achieved is to promote fair and inclusive policies for equal students' political participation according to ability rather than gender. Additionally, UniSEN should engage with external organisations with relevant expertise to provide the SUG with training on leadership skills and good governance. These external bodies should be persons or organisations who are independent of the institution. This is necessary to show some form of accountability by the university and to avoid bias against the students. The SUG should be able to function without undue interference from lecturers and/or the Student Affairs department, to avoid nepotism. For instance, Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) advocate for the government to grant autonomy to universities for quality output to be achieved, including an 'uninterrupted academic calendar… and enabling teaching-learning environment, [and to quell] the incessant face-off between the ASUU and the government' (p. 346). In turn, I would suggest that HEIs enable autonomous SUG bodies, with clear agreements in place regarding the responsibilities of all university stakeholders. This could result in student welfare issues being dealt with fairly by students themselves in the first instance. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) further indicate that it would prevent university authorities from exerting forceful control over students which, if not curbed, could lead to 'volatile and militant student unionism' (p. 345). Student autonomy would encourage interaction, dialogue, and the negotiation of ideas between staff and students for the latter's progress (Ibid). Lastly, another form of empowerment is to enable female students to assume leadership roles, whether at classroom, department, faculty or SUG levels. This recommendation came directly from my research partners as we discussed the possibilities of changing existing systems through gender representation, which would also increase their agency and autonomy.

Engagement for Knowledge Sustainability

At the third level, UniSEN must engage students as co-creators of knowledge, with an emphasis on student voice (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011). When students collaborate with academic staff, for example, to re-design a decolonised curriculum, they become active agents in their own learning, it improves their performance and increases staff satisfaction (Bovill, 2013), resulting in effective and sustainable knowledge in teaching and learning. According to Dollinger et al's (2018) study on co-creation in HE,

> Co-production with consumers [students] is a system allowing for consumer [student] resource integration very early in the value chain of production [of knowledge], where consumers' [students'] knowledge, experiences and opinions can influence the creation of the service and product. (p. 212)

For example, the shared lived experiences of female students could contribute in terms of knowledge towards decolonising the curriculum and planning a new one on women and gender studies at UniSEN, as recommended in Table 7.1 on the gender policy (see Section 8.2.1).

Furthermore, HEIs can use appropriate theoretical models of student engagement as a driver for change in teaching and learning, such as the one produced by Dunne and Zandstra (2011) – this is attached as Appendix XII. The authors suggest that this model is a starting point from which to evaluate the level of support that students currently have from the university authorities. In the UniSEN context, I recommend that the student voice process should first involve students' evaluations of their own experiences of HE through surveys, focus groups and voting strategies. However, my research partners stressed that these proposed systems would work only if anonymity can be ensured as they fear the repercussions (such as bullying and victimisation) if their views are exposed. Thereafter, HE staff and students can engage in solving the identified challenges in departmental teams or across faculties (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011). As earlier mentioned, this would also provide opportunities for female students' representation in university management.

Adopting this model would also signify UniSEN's commitment to balance power relations, to create a real learning community by being willing to engage with the female students' ideas and experiences, to uncover challenges and collectively decide on sustainable ways in which

they can be overcome (J. Peters, 2019, personal communication, 8th March). The sustainability of ideas and solutions is important for current and future generations of students to benefit from the opportunities for overall human development offered at UniSEN in accordance with the stated aim of producing graduates with attributes that include:

> logical reasoning, high ethical standards in personal and professional life, high sense of responsibility, self-confidence, self-employability, [and] ability to transfer knowledge into practice. (UniSEN General and Academic Regulations, 2014 p. 1)

Sustainability in education would also involve a continual delivery of quality processes for students to accomplish good academic results in the long-term. It ensures their individual wellbeing development through providing opportunities for progress and working to eliminate setbacks. As previously discussed also, social and political sustainable development require an institutional freedom from cultural biases and the acknowledgement of differences (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009), for example, regarding gender.

These recommendations could result in influencing policy and practice through an implementation of critical changes in the way that student voices are sought and heard on wellbeing issues, increased students' advocacy, and create an enabling culture for mutual relationship and respect between the university authorities, staff and students.

8.4 Future Research Directions

While this study focused on female undergraduate students' wellbeing capabilities in pursuit of gender justice in Nigerian HEIs, it also raised some unanswered questions and areas for further exploration. One intriguing possibility for further research is regarding the seeming own-gender bias between female staff and students as narrated by some of my research partners. I would be interested in finding out the extent of this phenomenon, if the staff are aware of it and if its underlying causes are in any way linked to postcolonialism and patriarchy. Another aspect of this is the idea of decoloniality of minds, of the curriculum and of women in institutions and in the wider Nigerian society. A further important study to be conducted would focus on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of female students in Nigerian HEIs. Given the stigma that this still operates in society, it is necessary to delve deeper into this area to de-

stigmatise, raise awareness, and find solutions for any problems that young women may face in the future, especially if traumatic issues are not dealt with in good time. I have also recently attended a mental health first aid training course at the University of Bristol and, in light of the WHO's (2017) statement that over 80% of anxiety and depressive disorders were found in low and middle-income countries, it would be interesting to conduct a study on these disorders with students in high income countries such as the United Kingdom.

On a professional level, I am interested in conducting a comparative study on the personal development of young women in postcolonial Africa as compared to those in the global North. Also, some of the research studies discussed in this thesis (for example, Odejide 2007; Mama, 2007; Aina 2014, 2016; Loots and Walker, 2015) investigated gender issues focusing on one African country such as South Africa or Nigeria. I would further explore the cross-cultural influences on women and girls on the African continent, and within the HE context, study the potential of political leadership for young women in Kenya (East Africa) and Nigeria (West Africa). The recommendation of Kenya, and the University of Nairobi in particular, came from Ifunanya where she had identified the Women Students Welfare Association (WOSWA)[70] with strong leaders and active members (to be discussed further in Chapter 9).

8.4.1 Implications for Research and Dissemination

This study carries methodological implications for the practice of more qualitative studies in the Nigerian HE context as opposed to the usual quantitative modes of inquiry, including surveys and questionnaires. As discussed in Section 1.2 on the rationale for this study, qualitative methodologies and methods, albeit time-consuming and often not properly funded (Ogbogu, 2009; Kamba's (2010); Aina, 2014; Nwakpa, 2015), provide a deeper understanding and analysis of the issues under investigation. The transferability of research using a case study such as UniSEN also means that the findings and recommendations may have comparable outcomes for similar HEIs in Nigeria and internationally. This is because the UniSEN case 'is a microcosm of some larger system or of a whole society: that what is found there is in some

[70] WOSWA is an association set up by female students for female students at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. The association conducts regular campaigns and training on anti-rape strategies, capacity building, health checks, teen and unwanted pregnancies, mentoring, etc. (See https://cees.uonbi.ac.ke/index.php?q=node/374)

sense symptomatic of what is going on more generally' (Hammersley et al, 2000 p. 2). Also, the new conceptual PWB developed from the findings could be useful for other international organisations and researchers that work with groups with similar characteristics as the young women that participated in this study.

Moreover, the use of a critical tradition of knowledge construction (as discussed in Chapter 4) can contribute to the ethical values of the researcher in two ways. First, the participation of and collaboration with the people being researched, particularly young, disadvantaged and vulnerable people, helps to empower the subjects rather than undermine them. Second, gaining the trust, time and attention of the research subjects may also enhance the data gathered from the study. Similarly, some of methods employed in this study, the campus walks and participatory mapping and vignettes sessions provide a novel and creative way of engaging with participants and are therefore recommended for contextual qualitative studies.

Another ethical implication resides in the dissemination of the research findings of this study. As the intention is to ensure that the voices of female undergraduate students are listened to, and to obtain better outcomes for them, it is essential to engage with the appropriate stakeholders. The findings will therefore be disseminated for policy and practice interventions (O'Neill et al, 2018) in the following ways: organise a policy day where myself, some female students can meet with HE staff and management to discuss some of the issues; produce a briefing report on how to enhance female students' wellbeing; and invite female staff as guest speakers for thematic workshops from this study.

Summary

This chapter covered implications of the findings from this study to support the wellbeing of female undergraduate students in four areas: regarding theoretical recommendations for decolonising women in postcolonial Africa; for Nigeria's national and higher education institutional policies; for UniSEN's procedures and practices to include gender, support for mental health and wellbeing, transformative pedagogy, student engagement and the environment; and to cover future research and dissemination. I also determined in this chapter

that to a large extent, the recommendations and implications can be transferred to other similar institutions in Nigeria, Sub-Saharan Africa and internationally.

The next chapter concludes the thesis with a research summary and an outline of the study's contribution to knowledge. I also provide some critical reflections on the research journey, including its limitations, and the thesis itself culminates with a brief note to my research partners.

-9- Conclusion

9.1 Research Summary

This qualitative study set out to conduct a critical exploration of the wellbeing of female undergraduate students in Nigeria, a postcolonial country. Using the University of the South-East of Nigeria as a case study, the following research questions guided the study:

1. How do the female undergraduate students experience wellbeing?

2. What are the wider contextual influences on the wellbeing of the research participants?

The research problem that prompted this study identified that female undergraduate students are at a critical phase between adolescence and adulthood, therefore their current lived experiences will not only positively or negatively affect their wellbeing, but those experiences will also shape their aspirations, decisions and future lives. Furthermore, women in postcolonial Nigeria are also influenced by the culture, religion, tradition, politics, economy and patriarchy; as such they are subject to marginalisation, intimidation, oppression and unjust treatment. They are also denied equal resources and opportunities. For young female students, these discriminatory practices inevitably threaten their wellbeing and thwart their capabilities and agency freedoms. The study further identified that there was a lack of published studies relating to the wellbeing of female undergraduate students in Nigeria.

The substantive topic was problematised through the theoretical frameworks of subjective wellbeing (White, 2010) and the capability approach (Nussbaum, 2000) for gender justice. Being a qualitative study, the philosophical approaches comprised a relativist ontology as my view of reality and a postcolonial feminist perspective as my view of knowledge. A critical participatory methodology was used appropriately to research *with*, as opposed to *on*, the participants. This subsequently lent itself to the methods that ensured valued contributions from fifteen primary research partners with whom I co-constructed knowledge. Due to the flexible and emergent nature of qualitative research, I was able to adapt the study to suit the complex contextual changes that were encountered, as well as take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities. One of these opportunities was receiving information about and the permission from my gatekeeper to attend the teaching practice orientation session for

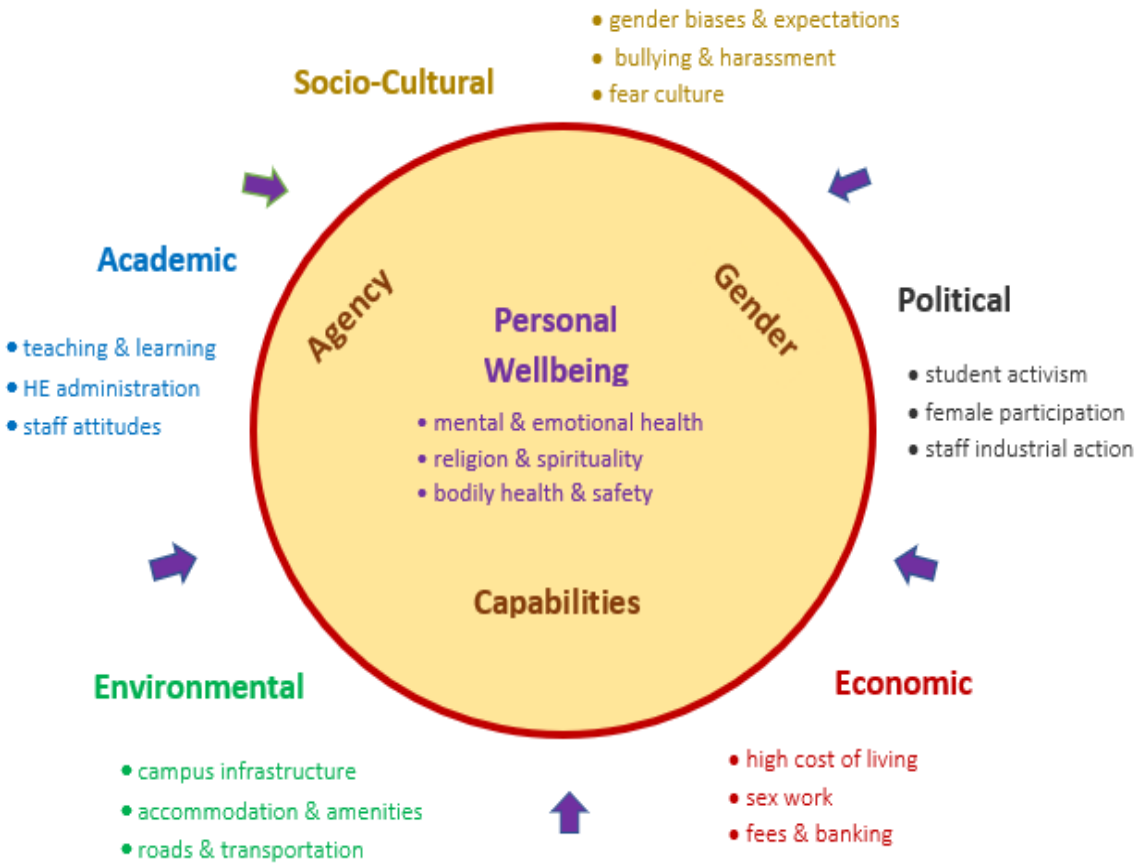
Education students in their third year of study. Other secondary sources of data included interactions with a male student, university staff (academic and non-academic), and key documents such as institutional policies and visual data.

The four methods employed for this study were participant observations and researchers' fieldnotes, campus walks, participatory mapping and vignettes groups and qualitative interviews. Given the substantive topic, some of the ethical issues considered were the safety and wellbeing of the participants and the management and security of their data. A total of three years and nine months were spent on the research process from initial preparations to fieldwork and data collection, critically analysing the data through a narrative approach (Riessman, 2005) comprising the thematic and interactional aspects, and culminating in presenting the findings through the writing up of this thesis.

9.2 Contribution to Knowledge

Four arguments were made from this study. First, subjective wellbeing does not adequately represent an individual's deeper sense of self. A clearer distinction was made between the terms *subjective* and *personal* in acknowledging that the simplified concept of personal wellbeing is more applicable within the Nigerian context. The study further acknowledged that *wellbeing* is a Eurocentric term that does not generally reflect the ideas and conditions described by respondents. Although the term *welfare* is more commonly used and understood, it still does not adequately depict the mental and emotional aspects of an individual. Second, there is a need for increased awareness and the provision of students' mental health services and resources, as well as gender-related guidance and counselling, identified as a crucial part of personal wellbeing. Third, the personal wellbeing of female students is influenced by external welfare factors that are specific to the Nigerian higher education context, some of which stem from wider societal, patriarchal and postcolonial structures and beliefs. These are represented within five dimensions namely, socio-cultural, environmental, political, economic and academic factors. Fourth, it is important to empower and develop the individual female student's personal wellbeing, human capabilities and agency as well as the collective; this is because effective group-based capabilities, autonomy and action are embodied by individuals.

These four arguments culminated in a new personal welfare and wellbeing conceptual map developed for female students in Nigerian universities (see diagram below, which has previously been introduced in Chapter 7).



The nucleus of the map represents the intrinsic aspects that constitute a female undergraduate student's personal wellbeing through her gender, agency and autonomy and her capabilities for mental and emotional health, bodily safety, and religious inclinations. Extrinsic to these are the five dimensions that denote the wider welfare influences on her personal wellbeing including a culture of fear, gender-based violence, teaching and learning, poor campus infrastructure, the lack of female participation and opportunities for activism. The contribution to knowledge from this study is that the interaction between their internal selves and the external aspects of context constitute the personal welfare and wellbeing capabilities of female undergraduate students.

The thesis made recommendations for theory, policy and practice through the decoloniality of power, knowledge and being; in particular for decolonising women in postcolonial Africa; also for gender justice and equity in Nigerian higher education and her wider societal context. I addressed issues of poor institutional practices or inefficient processes; made suggestions for the critical transformation of pedagogy, information, advice and guidance for students, for the higher education contextual environment, and for student engagement as partners. There are implications for future research directions and plans for the dissemination of findings. A further contribution to knowledge is that the findings, recommendations and implications from this study are transferable to similar higher education institutions, groups and researchers in Nigeria and internationally.

9.3 Critical Reflections

This section redirects the academic discourse and theory back to individual praxis for female undergraduate students. I consider my role as a human instrument in the research process by reflecting on the limitations of the study, on my own ideas, biases and experiences. It also covers some of what research partners learnt due to being part of the research process. As discussed in Chapter 4, postcolonial feminism draws from the philosophical approach of critical theory, therefore part of the aim here is to outline the ways in which involvement in this participatory research process helped my research partners to empower themselves and to enhance their own wellbeing. Hackman (2005) maintains that 'social justice education encourages students to take an active role in their own education' (p. 103); thus, in addition to the recommendations detailed in Chapter 8, this study also has practical, actionable implications for female students in Nigerian universities.

First, I will consider some of the issues which constrained this study, then reflect on *our voices* – starting from my personal doctoral journey to the involvement of my research partners and culminating with a brief message of encouragement and direction for them.

9.3.1 Limitations of the Study

Apart from some challenges with the methods used during data collection (see Section 4.4.5), other general limitations experienced during and after fieldwork were time constraints, financial costs, and a lack of access to up-to-date information and statistical records. The time constraints occurred in two ways – first, by not being able to meet with certain members of staff in senior leadership due to their busy diaries; second, the difficulty in co-ordinating fieldwork dates due to ASUU strike action. This involved trying to balance the university's disrupted academic calendar with my research partners' availability and my own academic, professional and personal commitments from my outsider positioning. It meant that I was not only unable to use the innovative methods with all the research partners, but also that due to their conflicting schedules, it was difficult to organise the timings of some of the group participatory sessions. For instance, the vignettes group was only able to meet outdoors one evening and since the suitable indoor spaces were all closed, we sat on benches outside one of the departments close to school gate. This resulted in some noise disturbance from passing traffic and subjected us to insect bites. I was also mindful not to delay my research partners from returning to their hostels safely as night fell, so the time spent in the session was minimised. My inability to engage all the research partners with the innovative methods is a limitation to the study, for example, it presents a potential challenge to the expression of their functional capabilities, such as fully utilising their senses and imagination in certain spaces on campus, as indicated by Nussbaum (2000).

As a self-funded student with no external financial support for the study, I had to cover all the costs myself, including international and local travel for the three fieldwork trips, accommodation, subsistence and other research resources needed. The trips provided only a snapshot of my research partners' lived realities at those specific times. It was therefore not possible to engage them in prolonged discussions about possible solutions to the threats on their wellbeing, the deficit capabilities that hinder their quality of life or, as I consider in the next section, about their ideas on progress after the study had ended. As a result, I end the thesis with my own thoughts and suggestions for them to consider in Section 9.4.

Regarding data access, it was difficult to obtain up-to-date statistical information due to a lack of a computer-based records system, and ongoing issues with poor electricity supply. This meant that one either had to trawl through heaps of paper archives or rely on old and/or irrelevant information that is available on similar institutional websites.

9.3.2 In Our Own Voices

In this section, I first reiterate the rationale for including my voice from my positionality as human instrument and as the main researcher in this participatory process; then proceed to address the ways in which this study on wellbeing capabilities reinforced my research partners' awareness of these issues during and beyond the research process. In the thesis, I tried not to allow my voice to dominate those of my research partners because of the potential danger of it pushing out theirs, thereby marginalising them further.

Apart from a professional interest in the substantive topics of this study (see Chapters 1 and 4), I indicated that my personal rationale for conducting it would allow me to fulfil a moral and ethical commitment to tackle injustice, and to enable the emancipation and empowerment of female undergraduate students. However, I was also aware from the beginning of this doctorate journey that my own physical and emotional wellbeing were also paramount. I frequently considered how my wellbeing could affect the input of others associated with the research, including my research partners. My personal values have always been directed towards making a positive impact on other peoples' lives, particularly girls and young women. Furthermore, I had just completed a Master of Education degree also at the University of Bristol and through that research, I had investigated the impact of informal learning on the aspirations and experiences of girls in rural Igboland of Nigeria. It was that experience, including the fieldwork, that whet my appetite for further study; hence, the decision to undertake doctoral research. My personal development has since increased significantly on this transformative journey – as a person (in my prejudices, feelings and values to become an advocate for female students and a social justice activist), as a woman (dealing with being female in a research context that favours men), as a practitioner (in my attitude towards the privilege of using the knowledge in my work), and as a researcher (of such an important topic in a rich intercultural context). As the study progressed, it also became clear that for my

research partners and myself, this research could be deemed as an act of agency – from developing relationships as co-researchers and partners, to sharing discourses of wellbeing and contesting existing knowledges of unfair practices that lead to further marginalisation (O'Neill et al, 2018).

Throughout this qualitative study, I practised ethical reflexivity (see Chapter 4) by continually acknowledging my own bias and subjectivity, for example, when my feelings tended towards sympathy and/or empathy towards my research partners. Sometimes, I expressed anger about the institutional systemic failures; other times, I exhibited frustration with some aspects of the patriarchal threats to my research partners' mental wellbeing, such as the suggestion that not achieving an A-grade will cause mockery from a spouse and the end of the marriage. I also experienced feelings of helplessness and unease during my second visit to the field when the failure of telephone networks meant I was not able to reach or plan to meet with my research partners for a couple of days. This continuous examination of my thoughts and feelings helped me to check my privilege as an older researcher and outsider to the context, as well as the potential power imbalances between myself and my research partners. It enabled me to remain open and transparent with them when, for example, they asked questions about my own life and experiences.

Similarly, my research partners were encouraged to reflect critically on the situations that we faced, the decisions that we took and the lessons we learnt from the participatory research process; therefore, their feedback on involvement in the study was important to me. The choice and use of qualitative methods, particularly the campus walks and participatory groups, generated first-hand, inclusive and rich data, often from naturally occurring incidents. *In our own voices*:

> Kelechi: This is not what we're used to. Most times it's survey or questionnaire!
>
> Marian: As we were walking, thinking, writing, talking, taking pictures…it was so different and I really enjoyed it!
>
> Zibah: For me personally, the times that I spent in the field (including our communications via WhatsApp) were the most enjoyable part because of our personal and direct engagement.

Participatory methods also facilitated dialogues between the students and across differences (for example, across degree programmes, living situations, and year groups), and across interactions with staff members.

> MissQ: Me? Interview any staff here? Truly I never had the courage to do so before, so that I was even able to think about the questions and ask him [ASUU Chairman] taught me a lot. And he even gave me the phone number of who to call if we have security issues. I have shared it with my friends since.

By the end of my fieldwork, the following statement encapsulated the main idea resulting from the study for most of my research partners:

> Nneoma: Every day same old talk talk, really we need to move forward, *ka anyi na aga n'iru* [we must continue to progress].

Unfortunately, we could not explore this further and I reflected that the one thing that I will do differently next time would be to follow up on what this progress would entail for my research partners and how they envisage that it could be achieved. However, Akudo's suggestion was to organise a WhatsApp group for female students, the purpose of which is to continue the discussions of wellbeing and welfare issues. With the agreement of six other research partners, she volunteered to set it up and named it 'Female Students Welfare', resulting in a few robust conversations pertaining to said issues. Another significant outcome from this study was Ifunanya's information about WOSWA, the female students' group at the University of Nairobi, Kenya (I will write more about in the short note further below). Although the idea of setting up a women students' welfare group at UniSEN was initially met with apathy and disinterest, it became clear shortly afterwards that my research partners needed the time, encouragement and a safe space to transform their thinking and discuss any benefits it could bring to them. I also reflected critically on the female students' lack of awareness of the continued effects of gendered oppression, through patriarchal practices from colonial legacies, on their minds, agency and lived experiences (from existing coloniality of *power* and of *being*), it is necessary to engage them in re-defining how they may think of themselves – as less inferior to their male peers and staff at the university. I referred to this in Chapter 8 by suggesting the decoloniality of *being* approach to help them embark on a (re)humanisation journey towards wellbeing, self-empowerment and gender justice.

Following our recommendations on the emancipation of female students in Section 8.1, Steinberg and Kincheloe (2010) suggest that through critical theory:

> Those who seek emancipation attempt to gain the power to control their own lives in solidarity with a justice-oriented community. Here [critical theorists] attempt to expose the forces that prevent individuals and groups from shaping the decisions that crucially affect their lives. In this way, greater degrees of freedom from the regulation of power, interconnectedness, and moral agency can be achieved. (p. 143)

We cannot therefore consider emancipation without looking at power and/or empowerment. From the definitions of *emancipation* and *empowerment* (see Section 8.1), it is my understanding that emancipation is to *give power* while empowerment is to *take power*, with the latter often self-initiated. As previously discussed, female undergraduate students are particularly affected by negative, external power relations and dynamics. Shifting these power structures demands a two-way process of giving and taking; in this case, the female students themselves can move in the direction of self-empowerment. Ganesh and Zoller (2012) refer to this paradigmatic shift as requiring collaborative activism, which promotes the role of dialogue in activism for social change. Female students also need to develop strategies with which to deal with their peculiar challenges for example, taking individual responsibility, dealing with stigma and fear, re-discovering the institutional processes, and knowing their own student identity (Grimes et al, 2018). In the following note to my research partners, some practical suggestions are made for self-empowerment through personal, political and collective activism.

9.4 A Short Note to my Research Partners

I found Africa in protest.
At university, we were always protesting something, it was as if we had to prove to ourselves and each other, prove to each other that despite the stench of deprivation, we still had some power, that we were still alive, that we meant something.
I found Africa in the spontaneous songs of struggle, the irrepressible spirit, that kept getting back up after being knocked down.

(Foluke Adebisi 2017, 'Finding My Africa, Finding Myself')

Umunne m[71],

First of all, you need to realise that you deserve the right to use your voice and to speak out your opinions when faced with oppression by the school authorities or by your male peers. You need to build the courage and confidence in yourselves as needed to exercise your personal agency in fighting for your rights. Do not remain silent. You need your voice of protest to be heard because as Foluke Adebisi's words above remind us, it is in protest that we find our power and we find ourselves.

It may also be possible to negotiate conditions or to seek allies within the system, including some female staff. These can form part of your strategy for collaborative activism and collective action. However, you would also need to be united and disciplined to achieve this. There is strength in numbers. You can use your existing social groups, for example, the WhatsApp group to rally each other. Another way to achieve this is by establishing a network or association similar to WOSWA. Thanks to you (and with some funding from the Alumni Foundation at the University of Bristol), I visited the University of Nairobi and met with the leaders of WOSWA in October 2019. I discovered that their wellbeing issues are not far different from yours. So yes, it can be done… and yes, such a group could work towards your self-empowerment in Nigeria.

You will also need to be committed to achieving justice by:

- supporting, caring and standing up for each other to challenge that institutional culture of fear, particularly in acting against violence and harassment,
- insisting on and getting involved in the political processes, whether at SUG, faculty, departmental or class level,
- using your collective critical thinking strengths to deal with issues that affect your wellbeing, for instance lobbying for safe disposal facilities for used menstrual products, and for effective G&C services.

Second and most importantly, remember the saying that 'you can't give what you don't have', therefore you need to nurture and care for yourself. On a personal level, please try to spend time on a regular basis in self-reflection to clarify your own goals, aspirations and values. Ask yourself some questions: Am I happy with my wellbeing? If not, what do I want to change? What am I able to change?

Seek learning for self-development. Ask around for any existing sources of support that you can access; read the university's policies and procedures; take advantage of information published in UniSEN's bulletins such as the security hotline numbers; and find out about the activities that female staff get involved in as they may be open to you. On the issue of policy, it should

[71] *Umunne m* translates as 'My sisters'.

go both ways, therefore to a certain extent you should be able to influence the policies that have an influence on your wellbeing.

If there are any courses or training that you are interested in, do inform your Student Affairs office, it may be possible to arrange them at the university. In other words, do your part to empower yourself.

Lastly, please remember that your personal is political therefore:

> *Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation,*
> *and that is an act of political warfare.*
> *(Audre Lorde 1988, 'A Burst of Light and Other Essays')*

Final Words

I would like to end this thesis with words of *HOPE*.

Hope that individuals will experience personal welfare and wellbeing as each one desires.

Hope that young women, and in particular, female university students will someday have equitable opportunities to realise their agency and achieve their functionings.

Hope for societies that see women as human beings to be nurtured and respected.

Hope that girls will strive to achieve all that they seek to be and to do what they value.

Hope that future generations of women are empowered through the efforts and sacrifices of those that have lived.

Hope for diminished postcolonial legacies and patriarchal influences in countries such as Nigeria and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

And finally, hope to realise a better future for both women and men as this thought portrays:

> *I'm not striving for equality.*
> *I don't want to be equal to men.*
> *I want to transform society to something better than patriarchy.*
> *(Prof. J. Callaghan, 2017, personal communication, 16th February)*

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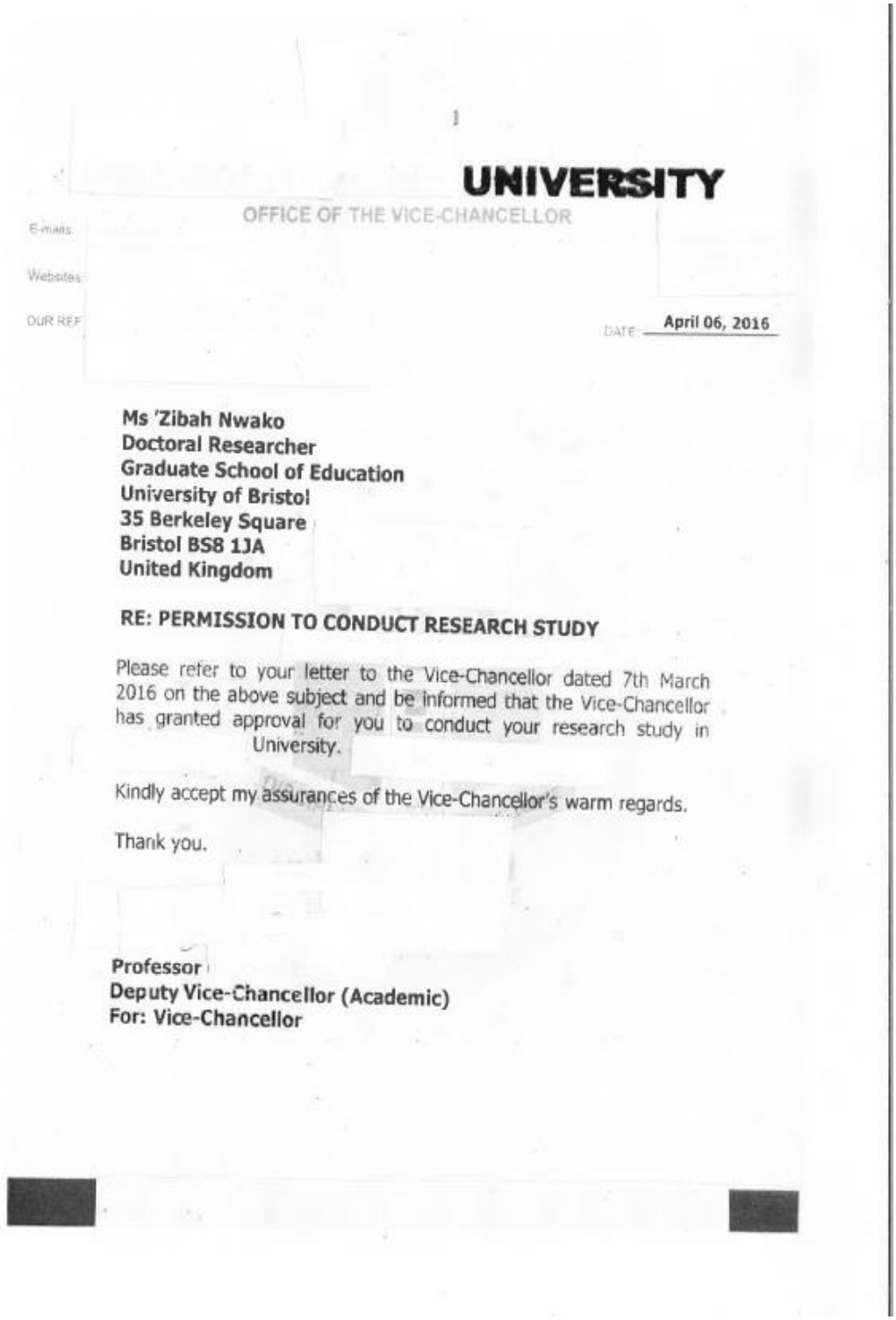
Appendices

Appendix I. UniSEN's Letter of Permission to conduct Research Study



UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

E-mails:

Websites:

OUR REF:

DATE: April 06, 2016

Ms 'Zibah Nwako
Doctoral Researcher
Graduate School of Education
University of Bristol
35 Berkeley Square
Bristol BS8 1JA
United Kingdom

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Please refer to your letter to the Vice-Chancellor dated 7th March 2016 on the above subject and be informed that the Vice-Chancellor has granted approval for you to conduct your research study in University.

Kindly accept my assurances of the Vice-Chancellor's warm regards.

Thank you.

Professor
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
For: Vice-Chancellor

Appendix II. Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Information Sheet

Good day! My name is Zibah Nwako and I am a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol in the United Kingdom. I was born and bred in Nigeria, having attended all educational levels from nursery to undergraduate level. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study entitled *'In Our Own Voices: A Critical Ethnographic Study of the Wellbeing of Female Undergraduate Students in Nigeria'*.

Research Area

I am studying about 'wellbeing' through the lens of gender (especially in regard to female students in Nigeria) and social justice, that is the fairness and equality of opportunities and access to services in education.

The Purpose of the Research

The research aims to understand how you would define the concept of 'wellbeing' and how it applies to your personal life as a female undergraduate student in Nigeria. It seeks to discover what the university environment is like for you, about your learning and development, how and which factors around you help or hinder your wellbeing. Finally, to explore ways through which your wellbeing can be supported.

Research Approach

The study will use a blended ethnographic approach, together with participatory methods. Blended ethnography is used where a study combines both face-to-face and online interactions.

This means that I will spend some time at your university, getting to know you and understand your lived experiences. The rest of the time I hope that we will maintain online communication through WhatsApp and BBM, emails, social media or Skype chats (as convenient for you).

Furthermore, the project will entail your collaboration and support in addressing the above-mentioned research purpose, with myself and a few other female students as a team of research partners.

Why you should participate

I would like you to be part of this project because it will offer you the opportunity to reflect on your own wellbeing, what affects it and how it is affected. It will also give you some experience in carrying out qualitative research and potentially, you may benefit from future research or projects on personal development, gender, life skills or wellbeing.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The information that you share with me will be kept confidential, and I will ask you and the other research partners in the team to do the same. None of your personal information will be handled by or shared with anyone else outside the research and after my thesis has been submitted. In reporting of the research also, you will not be identifiable from your responses.

How research will be conducted

The data collection period will last for 4-7 months. Four ways of collecting data will be proposed – semi-structured interviews, participant observations, campus walks and participatory mapping sessions. Each of these will be explained, discussed and agreed in advance. With your permission also, diaries/journals, audio recordings and other visual (electronic and print) evidence e.g. photographs, images, documents and artefacts will be taken and used, if appropriate.

Afterwards, transcripts of what we have said will be made, and you will be required to sign a form indicating that you are happy for the information supplied to be included in this research. The whole data collection and checking process may therefore last up to nine months, until December 2017.

Your right to withdraw

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw without prejudice at any time and for any reason, up until 31st December 2017. To do this, please inform me in writing as soon as possible. This is to ensure that the information collected from you will immediately be removed from the project findings.

As previously mentioned, I will send your transcripts for you to check, amend, edit or exclude them from the study. You may also withdraw all or part of your information at that stage, and will be asked to sign to this effect. After these checks are finalised, I will commence the writing up of the thesis from January 2018 and therefore advise that any request for withdrawal will only be possible before 31st December 2017.

What will happen to the data

Paper copies of the information that you provide will be stored securely in a locked cupboard, and electronic copies on a computer server and protected with a personal password.

After the data has been transcribed and checked as above, it will be analysed and the findings written up as part of a thesis. The research findings can be emailed to you on request. My thesis will be marked by internal and external examiners at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol; and made available to future University of Bristol students, may be published as journal articles and shared at seminars and conferences.

Who will verify and certify this research

This research will be verified and certified by the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, United Kingdom.

Complaints procedure

If you have any complaints about this research, my Supervisors can be contacted as follows:

Prof. Leon Tikly - leon.tikly@bristol.ac.uk

Dr. Cassie Earl - cassie.earl@bristol.ac.uk

Researcher's contact information

If you have any further queries about my research, please contact me through any of these means:
Telephone: 08030011915 / +447789063339
Email: zibah.nwako@bristol.ac.uk
School Address: School of Education, 35 Berkeley Square, Bristol BS8 1JA

Thank you in advance for all your help with my research.

Consent Form

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I am willing to participate in it.

- I understand the process of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project without prejudice at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential, unless I waive this right subject to discussions to this effect. I also understand that the I need to keep confidential the data provided by my co-participants and other researchers in the team.

- I understand that my participation may be audio-recorded and photographed during the project.

- I give my consent for any visual evidence and materials that I provide to be reproduced for educational and/or non-commercial purposes, in reports, presentations, publications, websites and exhibitions connected to this research project. I understand that real names will not be used with the photographs.

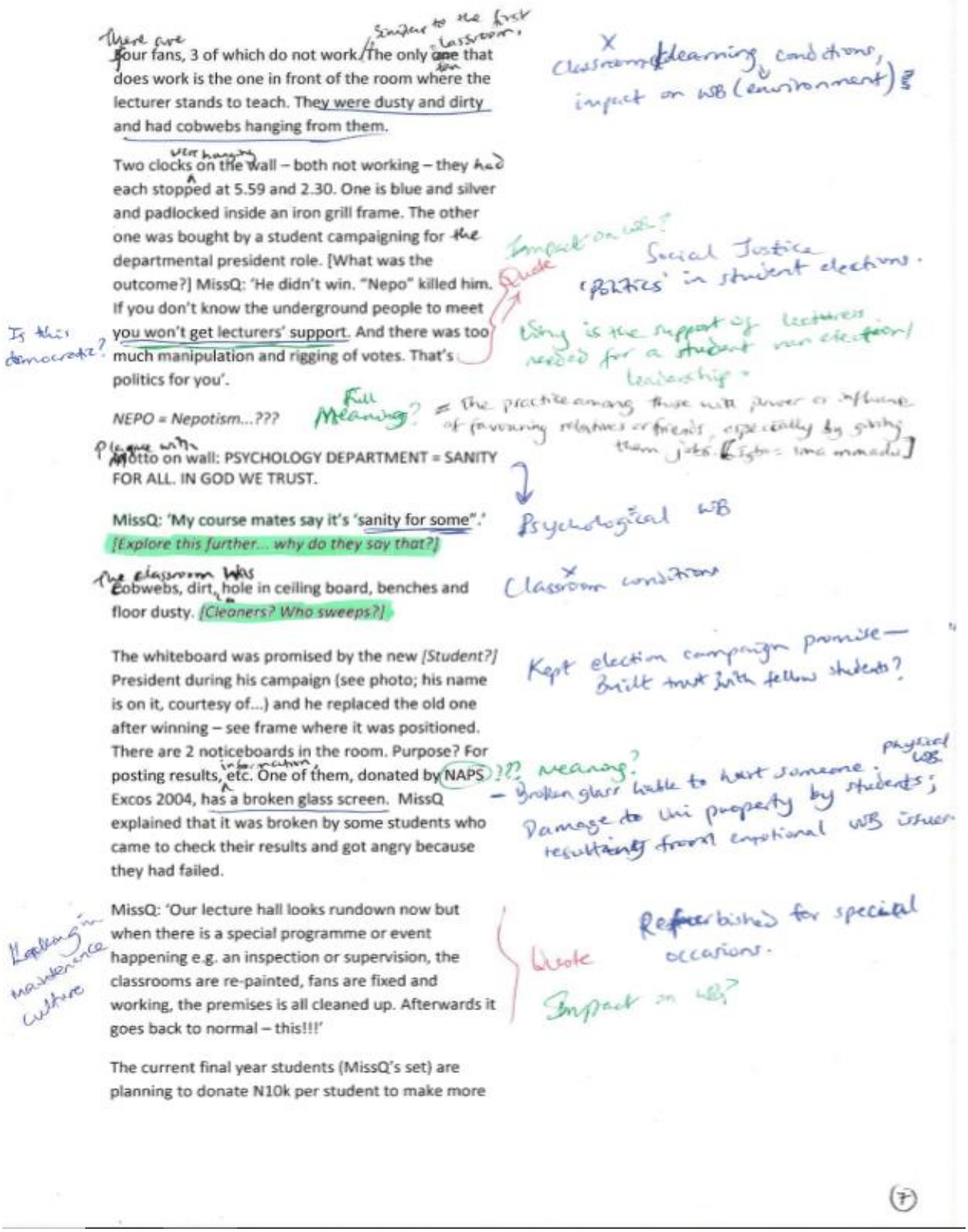
- I understand that the data collected during this project will be stored in a locked cabinet and/or on a computer server protected with a password and accessed only be the main researcher. The data will not be shared with anybody else apart from the research partners and supervisors; unless a full disclosure needs to be made to the relevant authorities.

- I understand that I may contact the main researcher or her supervisors if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Co-ordinator of the School of Education, University of Bristol, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed …… (research participant)

Print name …… **Date** ……

Appendix III. Excerpt of transcript with annotated memos



There are four fans, 3 of which do not work. The only one that does work is the one in front of the room where the lecturer stands to teach. They were dusty and dirty and had cobwebs hanging from them.

Two clocks on the wall – both not working – they had each stopped at 5.59 and 2.30. One is blue and silver and padlocked inside an iron grill frame. The other one was bought by a student campaigning for the departmental president role. [What was the outcome?] MissQ: 'He didn't win. "Nepo" killed him. If you don't know the underground people to meet you won't get lecturers' support. And there was too much manipulation and rigging of votes. That's politics for you'.

NEPO = Nepotism...???

Motto on wall: PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT = SANITY FOR ALL. IN GOD WE TRUST.

MissQ: 'My course mates say it's 'sanity for some".'
[Explore this further... why do they say that?]

Cobwebs, dirt, hole in ceiling board, benches and floor dusty. *[Cleaners? Who sweeps?]*

The whiteboard was promised by the new *[Student?]* President during his campaign (see photo; his name is on it, courtesy of...) and he replaced the old one after winning – see frame where it was positioned. There are 2 noticeboards in the room. Purpose? For posting results, etc. One of them, donated by NAPS Excos 2004, has a broken glass screen. MissQ explained that it was broken by some students who came to check their results and got angry because they had failed.

MissQ: 'Our lecture hall looks rundown now but when there is a special programme or event happening e.g. an inspection or supervision, the classrooms are re-painted, fans are fixed and working, the premises is all cleaned up. Afterwards it goes back to normal – this!!!'

The current final year students (MissQ's set) are planning to donate N10k per student to make more

Appendix IV. Confirmation of Ethics Approval

Ethics Online Tool: application signed off

Liam McKervey

Fri 24/02/2017 16:21

To:Zibah Nwako <zibah.nwako@bristol.ac.uk>;

Importance: High

Your online ethics application for your research project "In Our Own Voices: A Critical Ethnographic Study of the Wellbeing of Female Undergraduate Students in Nigeria" has been granted ethical approval. Please ensure that any additional required approvals are in place before you undertake data collection, for example NHS R&D Trust approval, Research Governance Registration or Site Approval.

For your reference, details of your online ethics application can be found online here:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/ethics-online-tool/applications/49602

Nneoma: Anyway uhmm they have been working towards that for females dressing proper dressing. But at that, there are females that are still dressing indecently, like short gown, all these errmm *tear-dem trouzi* [ripped trousers/jeans]… Rugged that they'll be showing their laps… Tear rugged that sometimes it will open and having some lines… It's the fashion… we're in it now… *{laughs}*

Gloria: The only thing I like about the school is that you can't dress anyhow into the school premises and that's the only thing I love about the school.

Ifunanya: Let me tell you guys a secret. Some group of girls will say they don't like the way the security do harass them. The securities *{sic}* are seriously conscious about dressing… If you dress indecently they'll send you out so long as they've seen you. But these people now, they'll come very early so as to pass. They know too well that their dressing is not good, they'll want to come very early. And some of them, you see that Ivenso gate *{pointing to the right side of the gate}*, if you take that place you'll get yourself at bus stand. Now the securities are here *{pointing to the left of the gate}*. So some girls know it's in the morning and everyone is rushing for lectures and this and that. So if everyone is coming in, those ones with intention of dodging the security, they just sneak through the other side. On this now, what I have to say is that the school is trying about dressing. One thing you should understand is that…

Marian: …human beings are hard to control? *{Everyone laughs}*

Ifunanya: Yes. In my dept I have a friend, she's a tomboy. Her own tomboy is like it's in her blood everything. If you see her, you'll think she's a guy. But for her now, she'll be like 'since I'm a girl, let me put on earrings'. But I know how much, how many times they do disturb her a week, maybe thinking she's a guy and she's putting on earrings. There's a kind of hairstyle you make, they'll ask you to go cut it. So they are really conscious about it.

Marian: Yeah, they're trying. The year I got admission, the first day I entered this school I was coming through this gate. So I wore one sleeveless clothes *{sic}*, and one leggings, I wasn't with jacket, I didn't even know much about the school so they did not allow me to enter from here. I had to go back to that road and saw one woman that was selling clothes. I had to buy a jacket and cover myself just to enter the school (because I was coming from Asaba then). Even necklace, there was a time they collected jewelleries, bangles… they stopped it… they are trying when it comes to that. But human beings… and it's not easy.

Ifunanya: Yes. We are youths and most of us are smart so we'll always think of a way. Because this is a trend…

Marian: The school is really trying but the students are causing it.

Appendix VI. Transcript of discussion on sexual harassment

Excerpt from transcript of discussion on sexual harassment at the Participatory Group with Vignettes session:

Gloria: There's this lecturer that whenever he comes to class, he'll be attracted to you He'll call you to his office and when you get there he'll tell you that for you to pass his exam, you have to sleep with him. He will tell you the hotel to book with your own money and give him the keys and he will tell you the time to come and meet him there. When you're not there, you're automatically carrying over his course. So, he's been doing it… And what they later told us was that a new VC came to the school and resolved all that stuff but it's still happening. It still happens because I know many people that still complains about that… the sexual stuff. It still happens.

Nneoma: And actually, we female students, we contribute.

Ifunanya: Yeah!

Nneoma: If you're a fine girl, you're a beautiful girl, you have it all, you have the boobs, you have everything, and you even have the brains – the 3 Bs.

Zibah: What are the 3 Bs? Boobs, brain and…?

Marian: Butt? *{everyone laughs}*

Nneoma: Boobs, brain and beauty. Or that's body, brain, beauty. So, if you're that outspoken, and you know there are people that don't pretend, wherever they are they are always outstanding…

Marian: Yes.

Nneoma: So, when they notice you? God, you're in trouble! So, what you do when you're a fine girl? I'll tell you basically from experience because I'm one and I'm still hiding under cover. But sha everybody has self-control but I'd say it comes greater from the lecturers. Up till now nobody knows I'm a student of that department. Because basically I come to school, errr questions, normally these days I now ask questions but before I don't ask questions as sometimes my mind will just tell me, 'what are you asking, don't you know this man, c'mon shut up, sit down'. So I'll just decide why should I even ask him, anyway let him just talk and go, I'll ask my fellow students. Based on the fact that when I stand up, he might get attracted to me, something like that. And in that situation, you wouldn't want it.

And sometimes when they share projects, hmmm, ha ha, that's where you enter into trouble. Like if you're a female in dept (I've had a friend experience this) they will ask you 'why are you doing my course, don't you know that who I am?' Knowing fully well that we have been told by our predecessors that this is how they do. When you want to pass the course, lie low. What we do with one of them in our department is just pretend …Pretend as if you're a dumb-head, you don't know anything. If he says 'yes', you say 'yes sir!'. If he says 'no', you say 'no sir!'. That's it. But some female lecturers are approachable.

So, the girl actually was this kind of… how will I put it… *chaka chaka* [bold, aggressive and a know-it-all]. She's manner-less, she's rude, she's beautiful, but she lacks just one B, she lacks the brain. Although she's intelligent but the manner part of the brain, she doesn't have. So, she can come, she knows how to manoeuvre everything now… She'll just say, 'Sir it is my body, I'm not giving o!' Something like that, ah! I don't really… I don't feel comfortable being around her because she might actually implicate me. And if you're in her group, it's this classic *{sic}* girls and me, I don't want to belong to one.

Appendix VII. Excerpt from transcript - MissQ's campus walk

We arrived at the Arts department and MissQ entered the first room. We met a male student who was painting on a canvas. MissQ asked him if we can have a look around. He consented. We asked if the paintings are for sale and he said it would be only after submission and marking. He introduced himself as a 300L student and invited us to go into an inner room which he described as the 400L room. We went in and met 3 students there – one female and 2 males. They were all concentrating on their work. We took photos and left, thanking the first student for his permission and approachability. MissQ wished him 'good luck'.

We left the painting rooms and roamed around the courtyard. It was full of sculptures depicting different characters and historical times as well as some famous faces. I was drawn to and wondered what the story is behind the female sculptures – a fighter, warrior with bow (no arrow), a schoolgirl, a slave trade woman (with an unhappy expression) – What made her unhappy? The artist's perception? The circumstances around her?

I noticed that MissQ seemed excited and taken with the sculptures and asked why.

MissQ: Each time I am bored or down or if sometimes I come for lectures and it's not going well, I come here and feel happy. Sometimes I think it would have been better if I was in this department.

Zibah: Which one do you like in particular?

MissQ: I like that ostrich one [no pic ☹]. But the one I like best is not here again. It was a dolphin with food in her mouth and she was feeding her baby with it. That one was very fine. I wish it was still here. But there are some others that I will show you later.

We walked into another large work room where the carving, moulding and sculpturing was being done. There were 3 male students here. One was carving something. The other two were an artist moulding the face of his model from clay.

As we continued around the building, making our way back to the front of the Arts department, MissQ showed me more sculptures. There were 2 that she pointed to. I asked if I could take a photo of her back (for anonymity purposes) with them. She consented verbally, and went on to describe them:

MissQ: The first one is a Boko Haram, Shekau type of one. There's another one that is a preacher/prophet. He has a Bible in one hand and a bell in the other. Maybe he is shouting 'repent for the kingdom of God is at hand' like those prophets in the Bible. Actually, when they first brought it here, I was afraid because it was in the night.

Zibah: What were you doing here in the night?

MissQ: Actually when they first brought it here, I was afraid because it was in the night. I came here to study *[pointing across the road at a square].* That place is Gambo Arena, where we attend mass. Most churches hold programmes there. Also SUG week. Some departments. use it for exams and lectures, and we also study there during exam period. But going back to my hostel at Ivenso in the night eh, *egwu n'atu*

kwa [it is quite scary]! Anyway, I was studying there one night when they brought this sculpture.

Zibah: But that place is half-covered, so what happens during rainy season?

MissQ: Eeeh, we use it like that naaa. In fact I am coming back there this evening because we have to prepare for Palm Sunday mass tomorrow.

Source: Fieldnotes (April 2017)

As we came out of the shops, having bought the materials needed for the participatory mapping sessions, Ije said:

I want to take you to one place that I don't like in this school *cha cha* [at all]! School Medicals.

She was referring to the health centre on campus, near the main gate.

MissQ: Ah, that place eh? My lecturer said that any treatment you get there, don't rely on it. It's more like first aid. Just go home and treat yourself properly.

We arrived there at 2.50pm and walked into the square-shaped building with rooms all around a courtyard-style centre. Starting from the left side, we made our way round the rooms. They comprised the waiting rooms, x-ray room, nurse bays, clinic areas, toilets, male and female wards, accounts/bursar's office and a couple of offices for the medical personnel. Back at the entrance of the health centre, there was a bench desk and we decided to sit down there. Ije started narrating her experiences:

The first thing we are supposed to do as a first year student is medical clearance. But I did mine in March because there was no time before and that was when I had chance to register. That day I left home at 6.45am and got here by 7.15am. They said the x-rays were supposed to be taken at 8am so we should be here before that. Then they will take blood samples at 10am.

When I reached here, there was a queue. One security man gave us instructions as we waited like, no leaning on the wall, no holding of pens because some students may write on the wall and if caught, they are taken to management and have to buy paint for the wall. Also, if the doctor or radiographer rings the bell, don't bang the door when entering. There is supposed to be a door magnet but it doesn't work.

The first thing we had to do was to submit a photocopy of our school fees teller (if you are a pre-science student) or a printout from the bank (for regular students) before the x-ray is done. This shows evidence that your fees have been paid. So, there are 2 queues – pre-science and regular students. The bursary person signs on the photocopied receipt. One girl that was there, the bursar woman got angry and threw her paper away, shouting that the girl did not use black pen on her lab forms. *Unu afugo nsogbu ndi a n'enye mmadu* [Can you all see the problems that these people are giving us]?

Back at the queue, we got urine sample container. At first nobody told us there were toilets so I went into the bush. After one man told us to use the toilets so others did.

Back at queue again and 2 nurses were calling our numbers. There were 50 students that day. When they call your number, you go for them to take your blood and collect the urine samples. Then they said we should go to the back for medicals, one of the nurses di ka *ogbanje n'a anube di* [looked like an unmarried witch].

When I went for the x-ray, he [the radiographer] said I should pull off my top, move closer to the machine, fold my hands at my back and breathe in.

Zibah: Naked? Are there no gowns for students to cover up with?

No oh! Gown ke? Nothing like that oh! He said he doesn't look.

MissQ: Of course he does, who is he fooling? *{Both laugh}*

He said 'Oya, *do quick* [hurry up], I have too many people waiting'.

Next, you go to another room and write down your student number and faculty. This was on a Friday. They told us to come back on Monday at 2pm.

On Monday, I got there after 1pm and collected my blood test and x-ray results. Nobody explained anything. All I understood was the blood group, genotype and HIV negative amongst the other results. They checked my weight and height and wrote it on the form. Then we waited for the doctor. At 2pm some doctors left and one young one came and saw waiting patients. He called me and my friend because we came first. He wrote his name and qualifications on our forms and said we should write the same thing on the other forms belonging to the waiting students. In short, using us as free admin workers. But ndi medical eh *{laughing}*, their writing is different from human writing o!! After attending to patients, he called me and I submitted the forms to him. He said I should number the forms according to when the students came. He then called us one by one into his office, pulled out the x-ray from the envelope, raised it in the air, put it back in the envelope and threw it back under the table. He checked the blood form and told me my CT was 7.5 *{laughing}*. I was confused. My friend's own was 7.8. I asked him what it means. He said total blood count... *otu blood m ha* [Literally: the height of my blood] *{burst out laughing again}*. Then we left.

Source: Fieldnotes from Campus Walk (April 2017)

Appendix IX. Why We are Going on Strike – ASUU Reveals (Full Statement)

ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU)

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

STRIKE BULLETIN NO 1

Dear Comrades,

1. Recall that ASUU had to emback on a six-month strike between July and December, 2013, and the strike was suspended when Government signed an MoU with the Union, after a 13-hour meeting with the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Of all the items contained in the MoU, only the two hundred billion out of a total of one trillion, three hundred billion naira of the Public Universities Revitalization (Needs Assesment) fund was released.

2. The Union also embarked on a one-week warning strike in November 2016 to press for the implimentation of the 2013 MoU. However, Government did not implement the understanding reached between the Union and Federal Government based on the intervention by the leadership of Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
   The Union had also met with the 2009 Agreement Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC) and had written several letters, press releases and communiques on the oustanding issues to no avail.

3. The National Executive Council (NEC) of ASUU met at the University of Abuja, Main Campus, Giri, on the 12th of August, 2017 to consider the results of a referendum from all branches in a bid to ascertain ways of convincing Government to implement outstanding aspects of the 2009 Agreement and the MoU of 2013.

4. The key outstanding issues include:

   i Payment of fractions/Non-payment of salaries.
   ii Non-payment of Earned Academic Allowances. (EAA)
   iii Non-release of operational License of NUPEMCO.
   iv Non-Implementation of the provisions of the 2014 Pension Reform Act with respect to Retired Professors and their salaries.
   v Removal of Universities Staff Schools from funding by Government.
   vi Funds for the revitalisation of Public Universities (Implementation of Needs Assessement Report)

vii Poor funding of existing State Universities and proliferation of universitis by their Visitors.

5. The result of the referendum showed that an overwhelming majority of the branches of our Union voted in favour of strike.
6. In the light of the foregoing, and having exhausted all avenues to get governments to fully implement the 2009 FGN-ASUU Agreement and the 2013 MoU as well as related demands, resloved to embark on a total, comprehensive and indefinite strike action commencing Sunday, 13th August, 2017.

What to do:

i. Do not teach any course whatsoever
ii. Do not attend any statutory meeting: Departmental/Faculty Board, Senate, Congregation or Council etc.
iii. Do not conduct or supervise any examination at any level
iv. Do not engage in supervision of project or theses at any level
v. Do not force any academic, to teach, supervise theses and projects at any level or attend meetings Department, Faculties, Senate, Congregations, Council etc during the srike.
vi. The **ONLY** source of information on the strike action is your Branch Chairperson.

Remain Resolute !

United We Bargain, Divided We Beg !!

[redacted]

Biodun Ogunyemi
President
For on behalf of the ASUU National Strike Coordinating Committee.
August, 12th 2017

Source: Ago (2017)

Appendix X. Example of HEI Gender Policy

Excerpt from MAKARERE UNIVERSITY – Gender Equality Policy Resolutions

7.1 ENGENDERING THE CURRICULUM Makerere University shall take all necessary steps to engender the curricula of all its academic programmes.

7.2 A SECURE ENVIRONMENT The University Management and Administration shall promote a gender friendly and inclusive secure environment at the university in order to ensure effective protection of bodily integrity and dignity of every member of the University community.

7.3 STUDENT ENROLMENT, RETENTION AND PERFORMANCE Makerere University Council shall support programmes aimed at improving gender balance in the enrolment, retention and performance of students across all disciplines.

7.4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, PROMOTION & RECOGNITION Makerere University Council shall invest in endowments, infrastructure and resources to support activities aimed at improving gender balance in the recruitment, promotion, retention and performance of staff members at all academic and administrative levels.

7.5 WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING The University shall adopt proactive measures to increase the participation of women in decision-making through recruitment, promotion and retention in order to eliminate the existing gender imbalances within the systems, structures and all core activities of the University.

7.6 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE The University shall promote and enforce a gender-responsive organisational culture to eliminate patriarchal-based inequities in all University activities.

7.7 NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PARTNERSHIPS The University shall promote and support gender equality networks and partnerships in order to develop strong gender equality advocacy and activism within and outside the University.

7.8 RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS The University shall adopt a gender-responsive research environment that improves our understanding of national development issues and impacts positively on the lives of women and men.

7.9 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND GENDER BUDGETING The University shall actively promote resource mobilization and gender budgeting processes as a way of ensuring adequate and sustainable budget allocations for effective institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue within the core activities of the University.

7.10 STAFF AND STUDENT WELFARE The University shall plan and provide for the welfare of all its staff and students in order to achieve optimal productivity.

7.11 CREATION OF THE GENDER MAINSTREAMING DIRECTORATE Makerere University shall elevate the Gender Mainstreaming Division into a Directorate called Gender Mainstreaming Directorate reporting to the ViceChancellor so as to enhance its capacity to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the GEP.

Source: Makarere University Gender Equality Policy (2009, pp. 11-15)

Appendix XI. University of Cape Town Student Mental Health Policy

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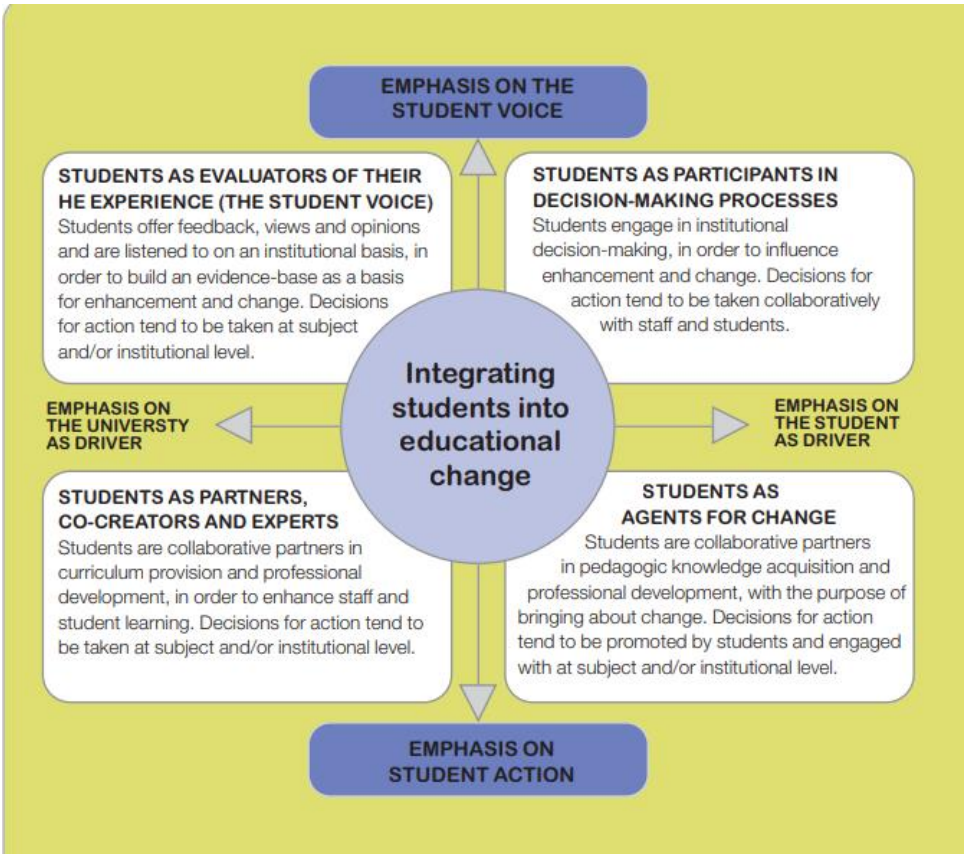
Source: University of Cape Town Student Mental Health Policy 2018

Appendix XII. Theoretical Model for Students as Change Agents



Source: Dunne and Zandstra (2011 p. 17)